

Alexander  
Raskin

**WHEN DADDY  
WAS A LITTLE BOY**

	Page
A WORD FROM THE AUTHOR . . . . .	7
WHEN DADDY WAS A LITTLE BOY . . . . .	11
How Daddy Rolled His Ball Under a Car . . . . .	13
How Daddy Tamed a Dog . . . . .	18
How Daddy Wrote Poetry . . . . .	23
How Daddy Bit the Professor . . . . .	28
How Daddy Decided What He Wanted to Be . . . . .	32
How Daddy Studied Music . . . . .	37
How Daddy Threw His Bread on the Floor . . . . .	42
How Daddy's Feelings Were Hurt . . . . .	46
How Daddy Made a Mistake . . . . .	50
How Daddy Learned to Write . . . . .	53
How Daddy Left Tiny Uncle Vic All Alone . . . . .	56
How Daddy Played With a Girl . . . . .	59
How Daddy Tested His Strength . . . . .	62
How Daddy Started in School . . . . .	66
WHEN DADDY WAS IN SCHOOL . . . . .	69
How Daddy Was Always Late . . . . .	71
How Daddy Went to the Movies . . . . .	77
How the Girls Were Mean to Daddy . . . . .	82
How Daddy Went Tiger-Hunting . . . . .	86
How Daddy Used to Draw . . . . .	90
How Daddy Fooled His Teacher . . . . .	94
How Daddy Stopped the Trolley Car . . . . .	98
How Daddy Killed a Snake . . . . .	103
How Daddy Failed to Learn German . . . . .	109
How Daddy Wrote Two Compositions . . . . .	113
How Daddy Spoke to the Poet Mayakovsky . . . . .	118
How Daddy Performed at a School Party . . . . .	122
How Daddy Played Ping-Pong . . . . .	128
How Daddy Made a Footstool . . . . .	136
MORE STORIES . . . . .	141
How Daddy Wasn't the Best Pupil in His Class . . . . .	143
How Daddy Collected Waste Paper and Scrap Iron . . . . .	148
How Daddy Had Scarlet Fever . . . . .	153
How Daddy Climbed a Wall . . . . .	159

First published 1966

Reprinted 1973, 1976, 1979

Fifth revised and enlarged edition 1984

Sixth printing 1989

© Raduga Publishers 1989

## A WORD FROM THE AUTHOR



Dear Children,

I want to tell you about how I came to write this book. I have a daughter named Sasha. She's a big girl now and often says, when speaking about herself, "When I was a little girl —" Well, when Sasha was a *very* little girl, she was often ill. She had the grippe, and a sore throat, and an infected ear. If you've ever had an infected ear, you know how painful it is. And if you haven't, there's no use explaining, for you'll never understand anyway.

Once Sasha's ear hurt so badly that she cried and

cried. She couldn't sleep at all. I felt so sorry for her that I nearly cried, too. And so I read aloud to her and told her funny stories. I told her a story about the time I rolled my new ball under a car when I was a little boy. Sasha liked the story. She was surprised to learn that her daddy had once been a little boy, and that he'd gotten into mischief and had also been punished sometimes. She remembered the story, and whenever her ear would begin to ache, she'd shout: "Daddy! Daddy! My ear aches! Tell me a story about you when you were a little boy." And each time I'd tell her a new story. You'll find them all in this book. I tried to remember all the funny things that had ever happened to me, because I wanted to make a sick girl smile. Besides, I wanted my girl to understand that being greedy, boastful, or stuck-up wasn't nice at all. That doesn't mean I was always like that when I was a little boy. Sometimes, when I couldn't think of a story, I'd borrow one from other daddies I knew. After all, every daddy was once a little boy. So you see, none of these stories were invented. They all actually happened to little boys. Now that Sasha is a big girl, she's hardly ever ill and can read great big books all by herself.

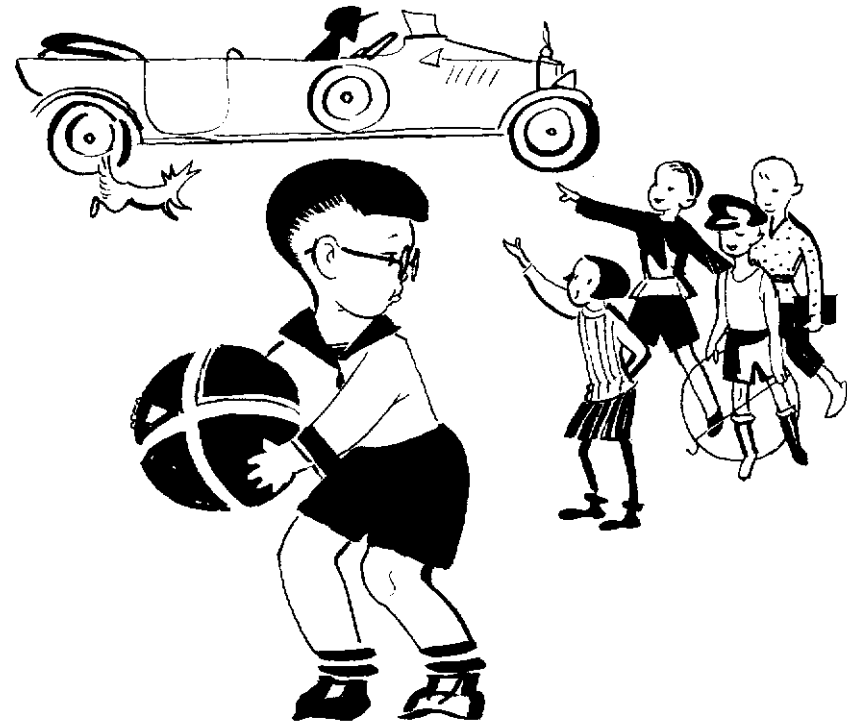
But I thought that perhaps other children might like to know about a daddy and the things that happened to him when he was a little boy.

That's all I wanted to say. But wait! There's something else. There's more to this book. Each one of you can discover the rest for yourself, for your own daddy can tell you about things that happened to him when he was a little boy. And so can your mommy. I'd love to hear their stories, too.

With very best wishes,  
Your friend,  
*A. Raskin*



## HOW DADDY ROLLED HIS BALL UNDER A CAR



When Daddy was a very little boy and lived in the little town of Pavlovo-Posad, his parents gave him a beautiful big ball. The ball was as beautiful as the sun. No, it was even more beautiful than the sun! You could look at it without squinting. It was four

times as beautiful as the sun, because it was four different colors. The sun is only one color, and you can't even tell what that is. One quarter of the ball was as pink as peppermint, the other was as brown as chocolate, the third was as blue as the sky, and the fourth was as green as grass. No one in the little town of Pavlovo-Posad had ever seen such a ball before. It had been bought in Moscow. I don't even think there were many balls like it in Moscow. Why, even grown-ups came to see it!

"What a beautiful ball!" they all said.

It really was lovely. And little Daddy was very proud of it. The way he strutted about, you'd think he'd invented that ball himself and had painted it those four lovely colors. When little Daddy went outside to play with his beautiful ball, other little boys would come running from all over.

"Oh what a ball!" each of them would say. "Let me play with it!"

But little Daddy clutched it and said, "No! It's my ball! Nobody has a ball like this! It was bought in Moscow! Go away! Don't touch it!"

And then the boys all said, "You're greedy, that's what you are!"

Little Daddy didn't care what they said. He wouldn't let anyone play with his beautiful ball. He played with it all by himself. But playing ball all by

yourself isn't much fun. That's why greedy little Daddy started playing near the other little boys. He wanted to make them jealous.

"He's greedy," the boys said. "We won't play with him."

And for two whole days they didn't play with him. On the third day one of the boys said, "Your ball isn't bad. It's big, and the colors are nice, but if it rolls under a car, it'll burst just like any other ball. So don't be so stuck-up."

"My ball won't ever burst!" little Daddy shouted. By then he was so stuck-up you'd think *he* was painted four colors.

"Yes, it will!" the boys teased.

"No, it won't!"

"There's a car coming," another boy said. "Go on, roll it! Are you scared to?"

So little Daddy rolled his ball under the car. For a moment they all stood there, waiting. The ball rolled between the front wheels and landed under a rear wheel. The car jerked as it ran over the ball and then sped on. And there was the ball!

"It didn't burst! It didn't burst!" little Daddy shouted as he ran to get it. Just then there was a loud *bang!* It sounded like a cannon booming. It was the ball. It had burst, after all. By the time little Daddy got to where it had been, all that was left of it was

a dusty rubber rag. There was nothing pretty or lovely about it any more. Little Daddy began to cry. He ran home, and the boys all laughed at him.

"It burst! It burst!" they shouted. "Serves you right, greedy!"

When little Daddy got home and told his parents he'd rolled his beautiful new ball under a car just to see if it would burst, Grandma, who was little Daddy's mother, spanked him. When Grandpa, who was little Daddy's father, came home from work that evening, little Daddy got another spanking.

As Grandpa paddled Daddy, he said, "I'm not spanking you for rolling your ball under a car, but for being so stupid."

For a long time after that their friends still wondered how anyone could roll such a beautiful ball under a car.

"Only a very silly boy could've done such a silly thing," they said.

And for a long time after the other children on the block teased little Daddy.

"Hey, where's your new ball?" someone was sure to shout.

But the man who lived next door didn't laugh. He asked little Daddy to tell him the whole story, starting from the very beginning. Then he said, "No, you're not a silly boy."

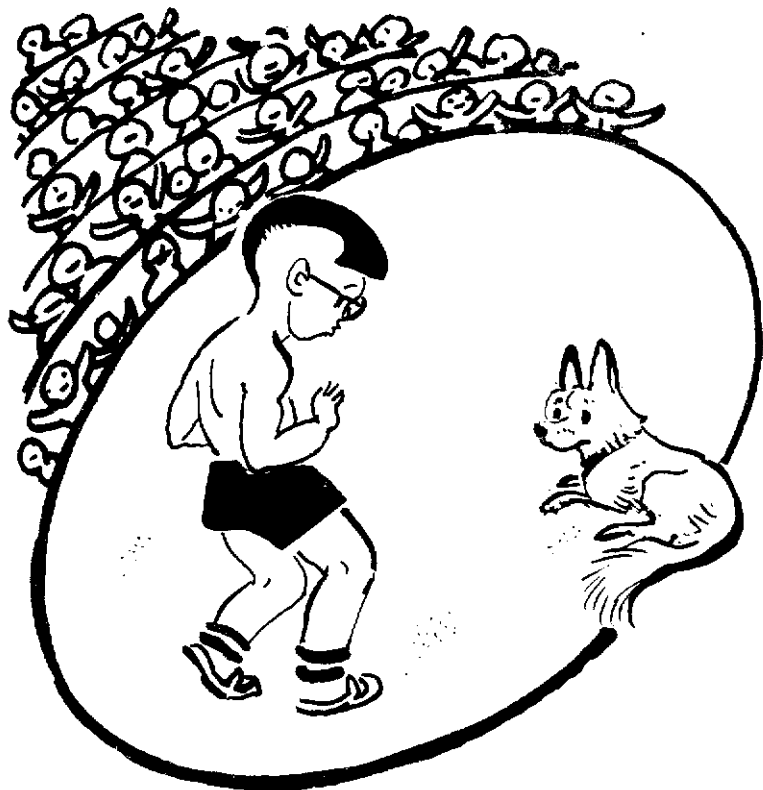
Little Daddy was very pleased.

"But you're a greedy boy, and you like to boast," he added. "That's really a shame. Anyone who wants to play ball all by himself will always be a loser. That goes for grown-ups, too. You'll be sorry later if you don't change now."

Little Daddy got scared and began to cry. He sobbed and said he wouldn't be greedy and wouldn't boast any more. He cried so long and so hard that the neighbor believed him and bought him a new ball. It wasn't as beautiful as the first one, but all the boys on the block played with it. Everyone had a good time, and no one ever said little Daddy was greedy again.



## HOW DADDY TAMED A DOG



When Daddy was a little boy, his parents took him to the circus. It was all very wonderful. He liked the lion tamer best of all, because he was dressed so beautifully, because the words "lion tamer" sounded so grand, and because all the lions and all the

tigers were afraid of him. The lion tamer had a whip and two pistols, but he hardly ever used them.

"Wild beasts are afraid of my eyes!" he announced in a loud voice. "My eyes are my greatest weapon! No animal can stand having a human look it in the eye!"

Indeed, as soon as he looked at the lion, the lion sat up on a pedestal, jumped onto a barrel, and even played dead, and all because it couldn't stand having a man look him in the eye.

There was a fanfare of trumpets. Everyone clapped and cheered the lion tamer. He put his hands to his heart and bowed to all sides. It was magnificent. Little Daddy decided then and there that he'd be a lion tamer, too. He thought he'd start by taming some animal that was not too wild. After all, little Daddy was still a very little boy. He realized that big animals like lions and tigers were not for beginners. He'd begin with a dog, and not a very big one at that, because a big dog was practically the same as a small lion. What he needed now was a not-so-very-big dog.

Soon he found just what he was looking for.

The little town of Pavlovo-Posad had a little park. There's a big park there now, but this was all very long ago. Grandma used to take little Daddy to the park. One day Daddy was playing, while Grandma was sitting on a bench, reading. A lady with a little white dog was sitting on a bench nearby. The lady

was also reading. The dog was very small, and it had big dark eyes. It looked at little Daddy out of its big dark eyes as if it were saying: "I want to be tamed so badly! Please, little boy, won't you tame me? I can't stand having a human look me in the eye."

And so little Daddy crossed the walk to tame the dog. Grandma was reading a book, and the dog's lady was reading a book, and so neither of them saw what was happening.

The dog was lying under the bench, looking at little Daddy strangely out of its big dark eyes. Little Daddy was walking towards it very slowly. "Oh-oh, I think it can stand my look. I think I should've started with a lion. I think it's changed its mind about being tamed," little Daddy was saying to himself.

As it was a very hot day, little Daddy only had on his sandals and shorts. He kept getting closer and closer. The dog just lay there, watching him. When little Daddy was very close, it suddenly jumped at him and bit his naked stomach. Little Daddy screamed. Grandma screamed. The dog's lady screamed, and the dog started barking.

Little Daddy was screaming, "Oww! It bit me!"

Grandma was screaming, "Oh! It bit him!"

The dog's lady was screaming, "He was teasing it! My dog never bit anyone!"

You can just imagine what the dog was screaming.

People came running from all over. They were all shouting, "It's terrible!"

A park attendant came over and said, "Little boy, were you teasing that dog?"

"No," said little Daddy. "I was taming it."

Everyone laughed.

"And how were you doing that?"

"I was walking towards it and looking at it," little Daddy said. "Now I know it can't stand having a human look it in the eye."

Everyone laughed again.

"See!" said the lady. "The boy's to blame. No one asked him to tame my dog. And you," she said, turning to Grandma, "should be fined for not looking after your child."

Grandma gasped. She was so surprised she couldn't even utter a word.

Then the park attendant said, "See that sign? *No Dogs Allowed!* If it said *No Children Allowed!* I would've fined this little boy's mother. But now I'll fine you. And I'll have to ask you to leave the park. This child was playing, and you have a dog that bites. It's okay to play here, but not to bite. However, use your head when you're playing. After all, the dog didn't know what you were going to do. Maybe it thought you were going to bite it. Understand?"

"Yes," little Daddy said. He didn't want to be

a lion tamer any more. And after the injections he had to have — “just in case” — he decided it wasn’t much of a profession, after all.

Now he had his own idea about human eyes, which animals were not supposed to be able to stand. When he was at the doctor’s and met a boy who’d tried to pull a big dog’s eyelashes, little Daddy and that boy understood each other right away.

Even though that other boy had been bitten on both cheeks instead of being bitten on the stomach. He had to have injections, too.

## HOW DADDY WROTE POETRY



When Daddy was a little boy, he liked to read. He learned to read when he was four and would have loved to spend all his days reading. While other children ran about and played, little Daddy read, and read. Grandpa and Grandma began to worry. They

decided it was very harmful for his eyes to be reading so much. They stopped giving him books and wouldn't let him read for more than three hours a day. But that didn't help. Little Daddy still kept reading from morning till night. He spent his three hours reading where everyone could see him. Then he'd disappear. He'd hide under his bed and read there. He'd hide in the attic and read there. He'd go to the hayloft and read there. It was nicest to read in the hayloft. The fresh hay smelled very sweet. He could hear everyone shouting in the house, where a search was on for him under all the beds. Little Daddy would come home at suppertime, and he'd be promptly punished. Then he'd have a quick supper and go to bed. In the middle of the night he'd wake up, turn on his light and read. He read *Gulliver's Travels*, *Russian Fairy Tales*, *The Arabian Nights* and *Robinson Crusoe*. There were so many wonderful books in the world! He wanted to read every single one of them. The hours slipped by. Grandma would come in, take his book away and turn off the light. After a while, little Daddy would turn the light on again and get another book, one that was as interesting as the first. Then Grandpa would come in, take the book away, turn off the light again and spank little Daddy in the dark. It didn't hurt him as much as it hurt his feelings.

It all ended very sadly. In the first place, little

Daddy ruined his eyesight: after all, the light was poor under the bed, in the attic and in the hayloft. Besides, he'd learned to read under the blankets in bed, with only a peephole for the light to come in. It's most unhealthy to read lying down and in a poor light. And so little Daddy had to wear glasses.

It was about this time that he began to make up rhymes.

He saw a cat and said:

*Scat,*

*Cat!*

He saw a dog and said:

*Spot,*

*See what I've got!*

Then he saw a rooster and said:

*Cock-a-doodle-doo!*

*How do you do?*

Then he saw his own Daddy and said:

*Daddy, please*

*Give me some cheese!*

Grandma and Grandpa thought his rhymes were very good. They even wrote them down. They read them to company. And some of the guests copied them down. Now, whenever there was company, someone would be sure to say, "Won't you recite some of your rhymes for us?"

And little Daddy would recite his latest rhyme. The one about Vaska the cat ended like this:

*Vaska the cat  
Didn't want any of that!*

The grown-ups all laughed. They realized the rhymes weren't any good, for anyone could think up rhymes like that, but little Daddy was sure he was a very clever boy. He thought the grown-ups were laughing, because they thought so, too. In fact, he decided he was a real poet. He recited his poems at every birthday party, both before and after the cake was served. When his aunt Liza got married, he had a poem for that occasion, too. This time it wasn't much of a success, because it began like this:

*Who could have expected  
Aunt Liza to get selected?*

Some of the guests smiled. Some of them chuckled, but Aunt Liza burst into tears and rushed off to her room. The bridegroom neither smiled nor chuckled but at least he didn't burst into tears.

Little Daddy wasn't punished, for he hadn't meant to hurt Aunt Liza's feelings. However, he began to notice that some of the grown-ups were not as pleased with his rhymes as they used to be. Then he heard one of their guests say to another:

"I hope that child prodigy isn't going to recite any more of his nonsense!"

Little Daddy went over to Grandma and asked, "What's a child prodigy?"

"It means an unusual child," said Grandma.

"In what way?" said little Daddy.

"Well, he might play the violin, or be very good at arithmetic, or else he doesn't pester his poor mother with so many questions."

"And what happens to him when he grows up?"

"He usually becomes a very ordinary person."

"Thank you," said little Daddy. "Now I understand."

He didn't recite his poems at the next birthday party. He said he had a headache. He didn't write any more poetry for a very long time after that. And even now, whenever anyone asks him to recite a poem at a birthday party, he suddenly gets a headache.

## HOW DADDY BIT THE PROFESSOR



When Daddy was a little boy, he was forever catching cold. He would sneeze and cough. Sometimes he had a sore throat. Sometimes he had an earache. One day his parents took him to a doctor who had

a sign outside his door that read: "Ear, Nose and Throat Specialist."

"Is that his name?" little Daddy asked.

"No, that's what he treats. Please be still!"

After the doctor had looked at little Daddy's ears, nose and throat, he said that little Daddy would have to have an operation. He'd have to have his adenoids removed. So they took little Daddy to a big clinic.

A very old, very stern and very white-haired professor said, "Open your mouth!"

And when little Daddy opened his mouth, the man didn't even say thank you. He just stuck his hand in and began messing around inside. It was very painful and unpleasant. That is why, when the professor said: "Aha! Here they are!" and pressed still harder, he suddenly yelled and yanked his hand out of little Daddy's mouth. Everyone could see that his thumb was bleeding. There was a hush in the office.

"Iodine!" the professor said.

He was given iodine. He dabbed some on his thumb. Then he said, "A band-aid!"

He was given a band-aid, and he wrapped it around his thumb with his other hand.

Then the professor said in a very low voice, "I've been practising for forty years, and this is the first

time I've been bitten. You'll have to find someone else to operate. I wash my hands of the whole affair!"

After that he washed his hands with soap and water and left.

Then Grandpa became very angry. He said, "We brought you to see a famous professor! He wanted to make you well! And what did you do? I want you to know there's a militia station around the corner. That's where they take boys who bite doctors. To think I promised you some ice cream after the operation!"

When little Daddy heard the words "ice cream", he became thoughtful, because he was never allowed to have any, since Grandpa and Grandma were afraid that his ear, nose and throat would get still worse. But little Daddy loved ice cream. In those days people believed that after such an operation children just had to have ice cream, because it supposedly stopped the bleeding.

And so, thinking about the ice cream, little Daddy said, "I won't bite any more."

Still, the young doctor who came in after the old professor had stalked out warned little Daddy, "Now, remember, you promised!"

And little Daddy repeated, "I won't bite."

After it was all over, the doctor said, "You're a

fine boy! Now you can have some ice cream. What's your favorite flavor?"

"Vanilla," little Daddy said and looked at Grandpa. But Grandpa was still very angry at him.

"Not this time," he said. "Next time. When you've learned to behave and don't bite."

When little Daddy realized that there wouldn't be any ice cream after all, he burst into tears. Everyone felt sorry for him, but Grandpa was very firm. Little Daddy felt it was so unfair that he still remembers it to this day. No matter how much ice cream he's had since then — vanilla, chocolate and strawberry — he can't forget the ice cream that was promised to him after his operation.

After that operation, little Daddy stopped getting sick as often as he used to. He sneezed less and coughed less, and his throat hurt less, and so did his ear.

The operation helped little Daddy very much. He understood that sometimes you have to stand a little pain in order to feel better afterwards. And though many different doctors cut and pricked him after that, he never bit a single one, because he knew that they were all trying to help him. After each visit to the doctor's he'd buy himself some ice cream, because Daddy loves it to this very day.

## HOW DADDY DECIDED WHAT HE WANTED TO BE



(When Daddy was a little boy, he was often asked: "What do you want to be when you grow up?" and little Daddy always had a ready answer, but each time it was a different one. At first, he wanted to be a night watchman.) He liked to think about the whole town

being asleep, while he, the night watchman, would be up. He was positive he wanted to be a night watchman when he grew up. (But then the ice-cream man came along with his bright-green cart. Why, if he were an ice-cream man, he could push a cart and eat all the ice cream he wanted to!)

"I'll eat a pop for every one I sell!" little Daddy thought. "And I'll treat every little child to ice cream, free."

Little Daddy's parents were very surprised when they heard that their son wanted to be an ice-cream man. They thought that was very funny. But he thought it would be a yummy way of being grown up.

(Then one day little Daddy saw a man in overalls at the railroad station. The man was playing with the cars and locomotives. But these were real cars and real locomotives! He'd jump on a platform and then crawl under the cars. It was some kind of a strange and wonderful game.)

"Who's that man?" little Daddy asked.

"He's the shunter."

(Now little Daddy knew what he wanted to be. Just think! He'd shunt railroad cars! What in the world could be more fun? Why, nothing. When little Daddy said he was going to be a shunter, someone asked him,)



“But what about selling ice cream?”)

(This was a problem. Little Daddy had decided to become a shunter, but he didn't want to give up pushing a bright-green ice-cream cart. At last, he found a way out.)

“I'll be a shunter *and* an ice-cream man!”

Everyone was very surprised. But little Daddy explained it all quite simply.

“That's not hard at all. I'll sell ice cream in the morning. Then, after a while, I'll go to the station. I'll shunt some cars there and then go back and sell some more ice cream. Then I'll go back to the station and shunt some more cars again, and then I'll sell some more ice cream. It won't be hard, because I'll park my cart near the station and won't have very far to go.”

Everyone smiled again.

Little Daddy got angry and said, “If you're going to laugh at me, I'll be a night watchman, besides. There's nothing to do at night, anyway.”

So it was all settled. (But then little Daddy decided he'd be a pilot. After that, he thought he'd be an actor. But when he and Grandpa visited a factory, he decided he'd be a turner. And anyway, he'd always wanted to be a sailor. Or at least a shepherd and spend his days walking along with the cows, cracking a long whip.)

(Finally, little Daddy decided he really wanted to be a dog. That day he scooted around on all fours, barking at strangers. He even tried to bite an elderly lady when she wanted to pat his head. Little Daddy learned how to bark very well, but he couldn't learn how to scratch behind his ear with his foot, though he tried very hard. He decided that if he went outside and sat next to Spot, he'd learn more quickly. That's exactly what he did.)

(A man was walking down the street just then. He stopped to look at little Daddy. After watching him for a while, he said, “What are you doing?”)

“I want to be a dog,” little Daddy replied.

(Then the man said, “Don't you want to be a boy?”)

“I've already been a boy for a long time,” little Daddy said.

“What kind of a boy are you if you can't even be a dog?” the man said. “That's not what a person should be.”)

“What should I be?” little Daddy asked.

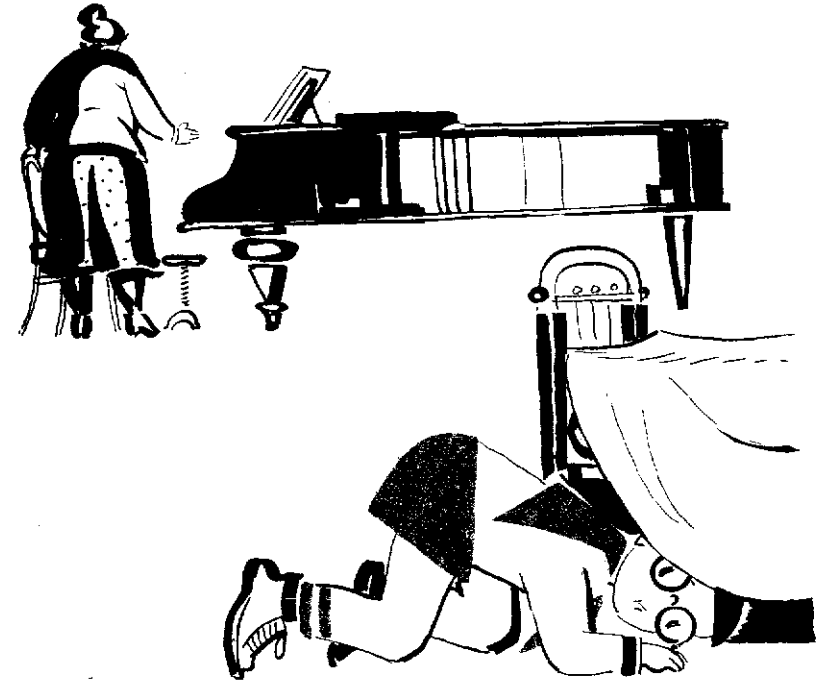
(“You think about that yourself,” the man said and walked away.)

He wasn't laughing and didn't even smile. But little Daddy suddenly felt very ashamed of himself. And he began to think. He thought and thought, and the more he thought, the more ashamed he was. The man hadn't explained anything to him, but he suddenly

## HOW DADDY STUDIED MUSIC

understood that he couldn't change his mind about what he wanted to be every day. And, what was most important, he realized that he was still too young to really know what he wanted to be. The next time he was asked that question, he remembered the man on the street and said, "I want to be a person!")

No one laughed. That's when little Daddy understood that this was the best answer of all. He still thinks so. First of all, you have to be a good person. That's what really counts, no matter whether you're a pilot, a shepherd, or an ice-cream man. And after all, a person doesn't really have to be able to scratch behind his ear with his foot. )



When Daddy was a little boy, his parents bought him all kinds of toys. A ball. A lotto set. Ninepins. A toy car. And then one fine day they bought him a piano. But this was no toy. It was an honest-to-good-

ness real, beautiful piano with a shiny black top. It was a grand piano, and it took up half of the living room.

"Can you play the piano?" little Daddy asked Grandpa.

"No," a said Grandpa.

"Can you play the piano?" little Daddy asked Grandma.

"No," said Grandma.

"Who's going to play the piano then?" little Daddy wanted to know.

"You are!" Grandpa and Grandma said.

"But I can't play it, either."

"You'll take music lessons," Grandpa said. And Grandma added, "Your music teacher's name is Anna Ivanovna."

Suddenly little Daddy realized that he had been given a very wonderful present. No teacher had ever come to the house before. He'd always learned to play with his new toys by himself.

A few days later his new music teacher appeared. She was an elderly, soft-spoken woman. First, she played the piano for little Daddy. Then she began to teach him the notes. There were seven in all: A, B, C, D, E, F and G.

Little Daddy learned them very quickly, because he drew pictures of all the notes, just like the ones

in his Alphabet Book. He said, "A is for apple." And he drew an apple. "B is for boy." And he drew a picture of a boy. Then he drew a cat which stood for C, a dog which stood for D, a fence which stood for F, and a giraffe which stood for G. Little Daddy was very pleased. But he soon saw that it wasn't at all easy to learn to play the piano. He got tired of playing the same little tune over and over, and over again. And anyway, it was more fun to read, or to play with his toys, or to do nothing at all. In about two weeks' time little Daddy got so sick and tired of his music lessons that he couldn't stand the sight of the piano. Anna Ivanovna, who'd been so pleased with little Daddy's progress in the beginning, now shook her head sadly.

"Don't you enjoy your lessons?" she said.

"No," little Daddy replied. He was sure she'd get angry and stop coming to the house. But she didn't.

Grandma and Grandpa scolded little Daddy.

"Look at the beautiful piano we bought you," Grandma said. "A lovely teacher comes to give you lessons. Don't you want to learn to play the piano? Shame on you!"

And Grandpa said, "Now he doesn't want to study music. Then he'll decide he doesn't want to go to school. Later he'll say there's no sense in working. La-

zy boys should be taught to work when they're young! You certainly will learn to play the piano!"

And Grandma added, "If I'd had music lessons when I was a child, I'd have been very grateful to my parents."

"Thank you very much, but I don't want to study music any more," little Daddy said.

The very next time Anna Ivanovna came to the house, little Daddy disappeared. They searched high and low for him, and even out on the street, but they couldn't find him. When the hour during which he was supposed to be having his music lesson was up, little Daddy crawled out from under his bed and said, "Goodbye, Anna Ivanovna!"

"You'll be very sorry!" Grandpa said.

"I'll punish him when you get through with him," Grandma added.

Then little Daddy said, "Go right ahead. Just as long as I don't have to study music any more."

And then he burst into tears.

After all, he was still a very little boy. And he hated his music lessons.

"Music should bring joy to the heart," his music teacher said. "None of my pupils hide under their beds from me. If a child prefers to lie under a bed for a whole hour, it means he doesn't want to study music. And if so, there's no sense in forcing him to.

Perhaps, when he's older, he'll regret it. I'll say goodbye now. I'll teach those children who never hide under their beds when it's time for their music lessons."

Anna Ivanovna left and never came again. Grandpa scolded little Daddy. When he was through scolding him, Grandma began scolding him. For a long time after little Daddy made a face whenever he passed the piano.

When little Daddy was older he discovered he had no ear for music. He still can't carry a tune, so he certainly would never have learned to play the piano nicely.

Perhaps some children are better off if they don't take piano lessons.

## HOW DADDY THREW HIS BREAD ON THE FLOOR



When Daddy was a little boy, he liked everything that was tasty. He liked salami. He liked cheese. He liked meatballs. But he didn't like bread, because he was forever being told: "Don't forget to eat your bread!"

He didn't think bread was tasty, so it was no fun eating it. That's what silly little Daddy thought and hardly ever ate his bread at dinner, or at breakfast. Or even at supper. He'd roll his bread into tiny balls. He'd eat the middle and leave the crust. He'd hide his slice under the tablecloth. He'd say he'd eaten it. But that wasn't true. He said that when he grew up, he'd never eat bread, and he'd never make his children eat bread, either.

"Just think, I'll never have to eat another slice of bread!" silly little Daddy said to himself. "I'll say: 'What do we have for breakfast today? Cheese? We'll have it without any bread.' And no bread with the salami! Dinner will be great without any bread! No bread with my soup or my meat. What a life that'll be! No bread for supper, either. How nice it'll be to go to bed and know you don't have to have any bread the next day!" That's what little Daddy said to himself, and he couldn't wait till he was grown up.

Grandpa and Grandma, and many other people besides, told him he was wrong. But he wouldn't listen to them. They said bread was very good for him. They said that only a bad and silly boy would not eat his bread. They said that if a person didn't eat good brown bread, he'd get sick. They said he'd be punished for not eating his bread. But still, he didn't like it.

One day a terrible thing happened. Little Daddy

had a very old nurse. She loved him very much, but would get very angry when he fussed at the table. That day Grandma and Grandpa were out. Little Daddy was having his supper alone. As usual, he didn't want his bread.

"Eat your bread, or you won't get anything else," Nanny said.

"No, I won't!" said little Daddy.

And he threw his bread on the floor. Nanny got so angry she couldn't even speak. That was even worse than if she'd scolded. She just stared at him.

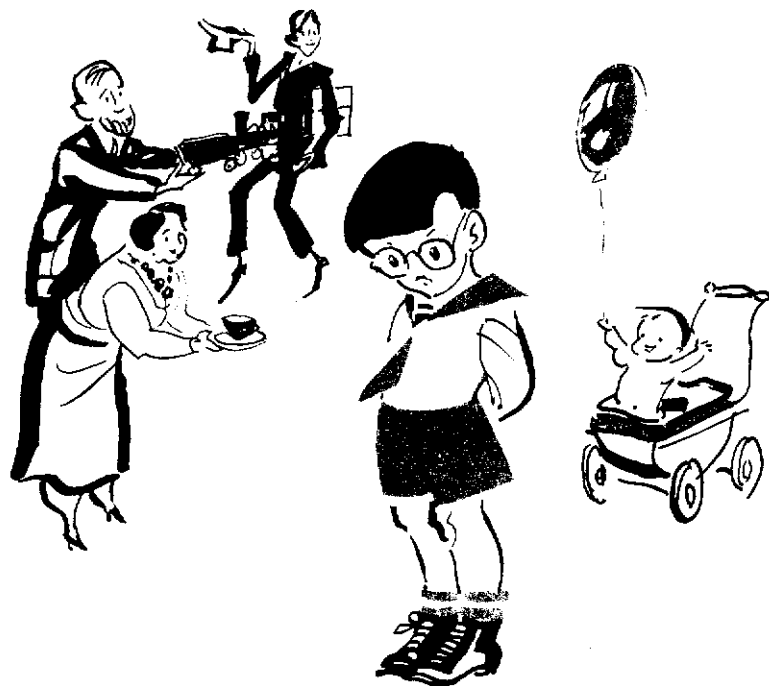
Finally she said, "You think that's just a piece of bread on the floor? Well, it isn't. When I was a little girl, I had to tend a flock of geese all day just to get a little piece of bread. One winter we had no grain left, and my brother, who was no older than you are now, died of hunger. If someone had given him a piece of bread, he wouldn't have died. They teach you how to read and write, but they don't teach you where bread comes from. People work hard to grow grain and make bread, and then you go and throw it on the floor. Shame on you! I don't even want to look at you!"

When little Daddy went to bed, he had terrible nightmares. The next morning he was told he was being punished and wouldn't be given any bread all day. Little Daddy had often been punished before,

but this was the first time in his life that he wasn't allowed to have any bread. It was all Nanny's idea. And a very good one at that. Little Daddy had a cheese sandwich without any bread for breakfast. It was very tasty and only took a minute to eat. But he was still hungry after breakfast, because he hadn't had any bread. Little Daddy could hardly wait till dinnertime. But a meatball without any bread wasn't very filling. He had scrambled eggs for supper. They tasted awful without any bread.

Everyone told little Daddy he should be very happy now, for he wouldn't have to have any more bread for the rest of his life. Still and all he was given a slice of bread the next morning. It was very tasty. No one said a word. Everyone watched him eat it. Little Daddy felt awfully ashamed of himself. From then on he always ate his bread, and he never threw it on the floor again.

## HOW DADDY'S FEELINGS WERE HURT



When Daddy was a little boy, he was forever feeling hurt. He was mad at everyone and at each person separately. When someone would say, "Why're you picking at your food?" he'd feel hurt. Or when

someone would say, "Why're you stuffing yourself like that?" he'd also feel hurt.

He was mad at Grandma, because he wanted to tell her something, but she was too busy to listen to him. He was mad at Grandpa, because Grandpa wanted to tell him something, and now *he* was too busy and had no time to listen. When his parents went visiting, or to the theatre, little Daddy would get mad at them and cry. He wanted them to stay at home with him. But if he wanted to go to the circus, he'd cry still louder, because he had to stay at home.

Tiny Uncle Vic, little Daddy's baby brother, was just a year old then. He made little Daddy mad, because he wouldn't talk to him. Tiny Uncle Vic just smiled at him and sucked his big toe. All he could say was "da-da", but little Daddy got mad anyway. If his aunt came to visit, he would get mad at her. If his uncle came to visit, he would get mad at him. If his aunt and uncle came together, he would get mad at both of them. Sometimes it was because he thought his aunt was making fun of him. Sometimes he thought his uncle didn't want to speak to him. He'd think up other reasons, too.

Little Daddy thought he was the most important person in the whole wide world. If he wanted to speak, he felt everyone else should be quiet. If he didn't feel like talking, he wanted everyone else to be quiet, too.

If he felt like meowing, barking, grunting, crowing or mooing, everyone else had to drop whatever they were doing and listen to the wonderful noises he was making. Little Daddy couldn't imagine there were other people, both big and small, who were just as good as he. If someone argued with him, or put him down, little Daddy would get mad. It was all very disgusting. He'd pout, scowl and stamp off in a huff.

He was forever mad at someone or other, or arguing with someone or other, or feeling hurt. All day long he had to be comforted and humored. The moment he opened his eyes in the morning, he'd be mad, because the sun had awakened him. When he fell asleep at night, he'd pout in his sleep. It was still worse when little Daddy played with other children. He wanted everyone to play the games he liked. He wanted to play with some of the children, but not with others. He always had to have things his way. He could make fun of anyone he wanted to, but no one was supposed to make fun of him. After a while, everyone got tired of his moods. They'd just laugh at little Daddy.

Grandma would say, "Do you want some tea? But don't get mad!"

"Let's go for a walk. But don't get mad!"

"Are you mad yet?"

"Hurry up and get mad. We've no time to waste!"

And little Daddy would get mad. The boys in the street would tease him. They'd chant: "Cry-baby, cry!"

And little Daddy would pout.

"Look, I'll wiggle my finger, and he'll even get mad at that!"

Then one of the boys would wiggle his finger at him, and little Daddy would honestly and truly get mad. That would make the boys laugh. They had lots of fun teasing little Daddy. Finally, one of the older boys felt sorry for him and said, "Listen, why d'you keep getting mad? If you don't pay any attention to them, they won't tease you any more."

Little Daddy took his advice. He tried not to get angry at every little thing, and soon the boys stopped teasing him. Still, he was so used to being mad that he couldn't get rid of this bad habit until he grew older. And not even then. It made things difficult for him when he was in school, and later at work, and it lost him many friends. People who knew Daddy when he was a little boy, still tease him sometimes. But he doesn't get mad at them now. Hardly ever. At any rate, much less than he used to.



## HOW DADDY MADE A MISTAKE



When Daddy was a little boy, he used to drink milk, water, tea and have cod-liver oil.

Cod-liver oil was supposed to be very good for growing children. But it was awful. Little Daddy

thought there was nothing worse than cod-liver oil. But he was wrong.

One summer day little Daddy was playing outside. It was very hot. Little Daddy had been running around, and he was thirsty. He rushed into the house. Everyone was busy, because company was coming, and they were baking pies and setting the table. That's why no one saw little Daddy pour himself a glass of water from a small decanter. He knew cooled boiled water was always kept in it. He gulped down half a glassful and began to choke. What could've happened?

Little Daddy felt as though he'd swallowed a pin-cushion. Then he decided that maybe the water was all right, but that something was wrong with him. He became very frightened. He decided he was dying and screamed so loudly that everyone came running.

Little Daddy kept on coughing and choking. His mouth was on fire. He felt terrible, and no one could understand what had happened.

"He's having a fit!" Grandma moaned.

"He's just making-believe!" Grandpa said.

That's when Nanny came in to see what all the noise was about. She guessed what had happened.

"He's had some vodka!" Nanny exclaimed.

"There's vodka in that decanter!"

Then everyone began shouting again.

## HOW DADDY LEARNED TO WRITE

"Call the doctor!" Grandma screamed.

"I'll paddle him!" Grandpa shouted.

"Give him something to eat! Quick!" Nanny cried.

As little Daddy munched on a sandwich, he mumbled, "I guess vodka's nourishing, too."

Suddenly, he began to feel woozy. Little Daddy sat down on the floor with a thump. The room seemed to be spinning around him.

Little Daddy couldn't recall anything after that. But his parents said he slept all through the day. He began feeling better towards evening. When their company arrived and the grown-ups each had a wineglassful of vodka, little Daddy stood in the doorway, watching them and feeling very sorry for them. He knew how awful they'd soon be feeling. He even said, "Don't drink that awful stuff!"

The next morning little Daddy was quite well again. But he never had another sip from that decanter. Even when he sees vodka now, he turns a bit green.

Daddy often tells this story, and he always ends it by saying, "That's when I quit drinking!"



When Daddy was a little boy, he learned to read very quickly. His mommy said, "This is an 'A', and this is a 'B'." He soon knew all the letters of the alphabet. It was lots of fun. He began reading books, and not just looking at the pictures. But somehow, he didn't

want to learn to write. Little Daddy didn't want to learn to hold his pen correctly. But he didn't want to hold it the wrong way, either. What he wanted to do was read, not write. Reading was fun, but writing was boring.

However, Grandma said, "How can you start in school if you don't know how to write? Just reading isn't enough."

"Now practise writing those letters!" Grandpa added.

That's all little Daddy heard every single day, because he'd have to write the alphabet every single day. He was awfully disgusted.

His wobbly letters were horrible. They were crooked and hunchbacked. Little Daddy hated to look at what he'd written.

Indeed they were a mess. But the ink blots he made were beautiful. No one could make such big and beautiful blots. If only people could learn to write by making ink blots, little Daddy would have had the biggest A in penmanship in the whole wide world.

Not a single letter he wrote was even passable. Besides, each page was covered with huge blots. Little Daddy was shamed and scolded. He had to rewrite each letter two or three times. But the more times he wrote them, the worse they looked, and the bigger the blots became.

He couldn't understand why his parents were torturing him so. After all, he knew how to read. What he wanted to do was write words, not just letters. But he was

told that you couldn't write a word if you couldn't write the letters that made up the word. He didn't believe them.

When little Daddy finally started in school, everyone was surprised at how well he could read and at how poorly he wrote. His penmanship was worse than anyone else's in his class.

Many years have passed since then. Little Daddy is grown-up now, but he still loves to read and hates to write. His handwriting is so terrible that some people think he does it on purpose.

Sometimes this makes Daddy feel very embarrassed.

When he went to the post office the other day, the clerk said, "I can't make out what you've written here."

Daddy was offended. "Why not?" he said.

"What's this letter supposed to be?" the clerk asked.

"That's a *U*," Daddy said in a near whisper.

"A *U*? Whoever writes a *U* like that?"

"I do," Daddy mumbled.

Oh how Daddy wishes he had a beautiful, clear handwriting now, so that anyone could read what he's written! How he wishes he'd learned to hold his pen correctly! How sorry he is that he never practised writing his letters! But it's too late now. And it's all his own fault.

## HOW DADDY LEFT TINY UNCLE VIC ALL ALONE



When Daddy was a little boy, he had a brother who was still younger than he was.

His brother's name is Uncle Vic now. He's an engineer, and he has a son of his own, whose name is also Vic.

But then, Uncle Vic was still a little baby. He'd just learned to walk. Sometimes he still crawled instead of

toddling. Sometimes he just sat on the floor. That's why he couldn't be left alone.

One day, little Daddy and tiny Uncle Vic were playing in the courtyard. They'd been left alone for a few minutes. All of a sudden, their ball rolled out into the street. Little Daddy ran after it. Tiny Uncle Vic crawled after little Daddy.

As their house was on a hill, the ball rolled down it. Little Daddy ran after it. Tiny Uncle Vic rolled down after little Daddy.

There was a road at the foot of the hill. That's where the ball stopped and where little Daddy finally caught up with it, and where tiny Uncle Vic finally caught up with little Daddy. The ball wasn't a bit tired, though it was the smallest of the three. Little Daddy was just a little tired. But tiny Uncle Vic was all in. After all, he'd just learned to walk. That's why he plopped down right in the middle of the road!

A cloud of dust appeared in the distance. Soon many men on horseback came into view. They were galloping down the road. All this was long ago, right after the war.

Little Daddy knew that the war was over, but still, he got very scared. He dropped the ball, left tiny Uncle Vic sitting there in the middle of the road, and ran home.

As for tiny Uncle Vic, he was quite happy to be sitting there, playing with the ball. He wasn't a bit scared of all those soldiers on horses. He wasn't scared of any-

thing. After all, he was still just a tiny baby.

The riders had gotten very close by then. The captain was riding a white horse. "Halt!" he shouted. He dismounted and picked up tiny Uncle Vic. He tossed him up, caught him again and laughed.

"Well, how're things?" he asked.

Tiny Uncle Vic gurgled and handed him the ball. Meanwhile, Grandma, Grandpa, and little Daddy were racing down the hill.

Grandma was shouting, "Where's my baby?"

Grandpa was shouting, "Don't shout!"

Little Daddy was sobbing.

Then the captain said, "Here's your baby. He's a fine little boy. He's not even afraid of horses!"

The captain tossed tiny Uncle Vic up again and then handed him over to Grandma. He handed Grandpa the ball. Then he looked at little Daddy and said,

*"Garun fled faster than a doe."*

Everyone laughed. Then the soldiers rode off. Grandpa, Grandma, little Daddy and tiny Uncle Vic went back up the hill. Grandpa said to little Daddy,

"Garun fled faster than a doe, because he was a coward. That's a line from a poem by Lermontov. Shame on you!"

And little Daddy really was ashamed.

When he grew up and read all of Lermontov's poems, he felt awful when he came to that line.

## HOW DADDY PLAYED WITH A GIRL



When Daddy was a little boy, he had a friend whose name was Masha. She was a little girl, and they always played very nicely together. They made a beautiful house in the sandpile. They sailed paper boats in a big puddle. They used to go fishing in the puddle, too, and they al-

ways had a good time, even though they never caught any fish.

Little Daddy loved to play with Masha. She never fought, she never threw stones at him, and she never put out her foot to trip him. He'd have been happy if all the boys he knew were like her. But they weren't. Besides, they teased him for playing with a girl. Whenever they'd see him, they'd tease in sing-song voices:

*Sasha loves Masha!*

*Sasha loves Masha!*

"When are you getting married?" they'd ask.

They all thought it was awful for a boy to be playing with a girl.

Little Daddy felt very hurt. Sometimes, he even cried.

But little Masha just laughed. She said, "Sticks and stones will break my bones, but words will never hurt me!"

That's why it was no fun to tease her. And that's why the boys only teased little Daddy. They didn't pay any attention to her.

One day a big dog ran into the courtyard. Someone screamed,

"It's a mad dog!"

All the boys scattered. Little Daddy froze in his tracks. The dog was very close to him. That's when

Masha ran up to little Daddy and swung her little shovel at the dog.

"Get out of here!" she shouted and stamped her foot.

The mad dog tucked its tail between its legs and ran off. And then everyone realized it wasn't a mad dog at all. It had just wandered into the courtyard. Every dog knows the difference between a strange courtyard and its own yard. Even the fiercest dog forgets how fierce it is when it's in a strange courtyard.

When the boys saw that it really wasn't a mad dog, they all ran after it and shouted. But you didn't have to be very brave to chase after a dog that was running away anyway. Even the dog understood that. As soon as it was out on the street again, it stopped, turned and growled at the boys. So they raced back to their courtyard and began teasing little Daddy,

"Scaredy-cat!" they shouted. "You were so scared, you couldn't even run."

But little Daddy said, "You were all scared silly. Masha was the only one who wasn't."

That shut the boys up. But Masha said, "You're wrong, I was scared, too!"

Everyone laughed when she said that. They didn't tease little Daddy after that. And he and Masha were the best of friends.

## HOW DADDY TESTED HIS STRENGTH



When Daddy was a little boy, he had lots of friends. They played together every day. Sometimes they quarrelled and even fought. Then they'd make up again. But there was one boy who never fought. His name was Vo-

va. He was a short, sturdy boy. His father was a cavalryman. Vova used to talk about Budyonny, his father's famous commander. He'd tell the other boys how brave Budyonny was and how he'd fought the Whiteguards. He was never afraid of generals, or colonels, or bullets, or swords. Vova also knew all about Budyonny's horse and sword. He was forever saying,

"When I grow up, I'll be like Budyonny."

Little Daddy liked to visit Vova. It was always fun, and Vova was always busy doing something. He'd go to the store for bread, or chop wood for the stove, or sweep the floor, or wash the dishes.

Little Daddy saw that everyone in the family loved Vova. Often, Vova's father would speak to him as if he were a grown-up. He'd say,

"Whom shall we invite for dinner this Sunday, Vova?" or, "D'you think the wood will last till spring, Vova?"

And Vova always knew what to say.

If one of Vova's friends came visiting, they'd sit him down and treat him to something tasty. Then they'd all play parlor games. Little Daddy was sorry it was never as much fun at his house as it was at Vova's.

He and Vova were good friends, but he couldn't understand why Vova never wanted to fight. One day little Daddy said,

"Are you too scared to fight?"

And Vova said, "What's the use of fighting against your own side?"

Once the boys began arguing about who was the strongest of all.

"I'm not scared of anyone bigger than me!" one of them said. "I can throw you all around like rag dolls! Just feel my muscles!"

"I'm so strong, I can't even believe it myself. Especially my left hand. It's just like steel," another boy said.

"If you want to see how strong I really am, you'll have to make me mad," the third boy said. "But then you'd better keep away, 'cause there's no telling what I might do."

Little Daddy said, "What's the use of arguing? I know I'm stronger than the bunch of you."

They kept on boasting, but Vova never said a word. Then one of the boys said,

"I know what! Let's wrestle! Whoever wins is the strongest of all."

They all agreed and began wrestling. Everyone wanted to wrestle with Vova. He'd never fought any of them, and they thought he was a sissy.

At first, Vova didn't want to wrestle, but when the boy whose left hand was as strong as steel grabbed him, he got mad and tossed him to the ground. Then the boy who said he could throw them all around

like rag dolls found himself lying on his back on the ground. Next came the boy who got real strong if somebody made him mad. He kept shouting that he wasn't mad enough yet, but by then Vova had him on the ground. Finally, Vova laid little Daddy out flat. Since they were good friends, he made believe it was hardest of all to throw little Daddy down.

"You're the strongest of all, Vova. Why didn't you say so?" the boys asked.

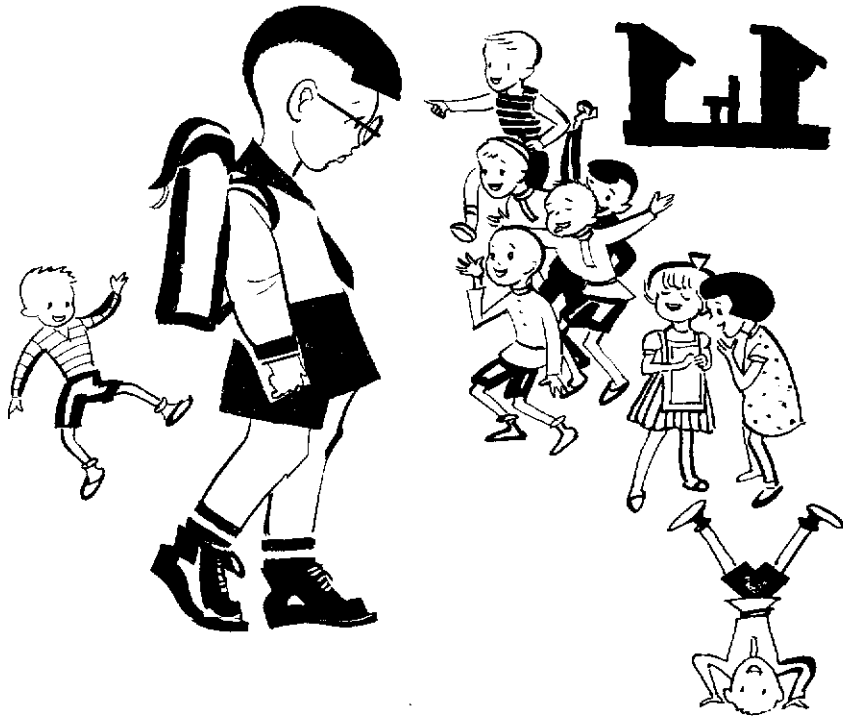
Vova laughed and said, "What's the use of boasting?"

There was nothing they could say to that. But from then on they stopped boasting about how strong they were, and little Daddy realized that it took more than boasting to be strong. He really admired Vova.

Many years passed. Daddy is a grown man now. He moved to another city and doesn't know where Vova is. But he knows that Vova has grown up to be a fine man.



## HOW DADDY STARTED IN SCHOOL



When Daddy was a little boy, he was forever getting sick. There wasn't a single children's disease he didn't have. He had the measles, and the mumps, and whooping cough. After each illness he had compli-

cations. And when the complications were over, little Daddy was all ready to get sick again.

When it was time for him to start in school, little Daddy was sick, as usual. When he finally got well and went to school for the very first time, he found that all his classmates had been studying for quite a while. They all knew each other, and the teacher knew them all by name. But no one knew little Daddy. Everyone stared at him. It was an awful feeling. Especially because some of the kids stuck their tongues out at him.

One boy tripped him on purpose, and little Daddy fell. But he didn't cry. He got right up and pushed the boy, and the boy fell. Then he got up and pushed little Daddy. And little Daddy fell down again. But he didn't cry this time, either. He pushed the boy again. They would probably have gone on pushing each other all day long, but just then the bell rang. The children filed into the classroom and took their seats. Little Daddy didn't know where to sit. The teacher told him to sit next to one of the girls. Everyone began to laugh. Even the girl he sat next to laughed.

Little Daddy felt like crying. But all of a sudden it all seemed very funny to him, and he laughed. Then the teacher laughed, too.

"Good for you. I was afraid you'd start crying," she said.

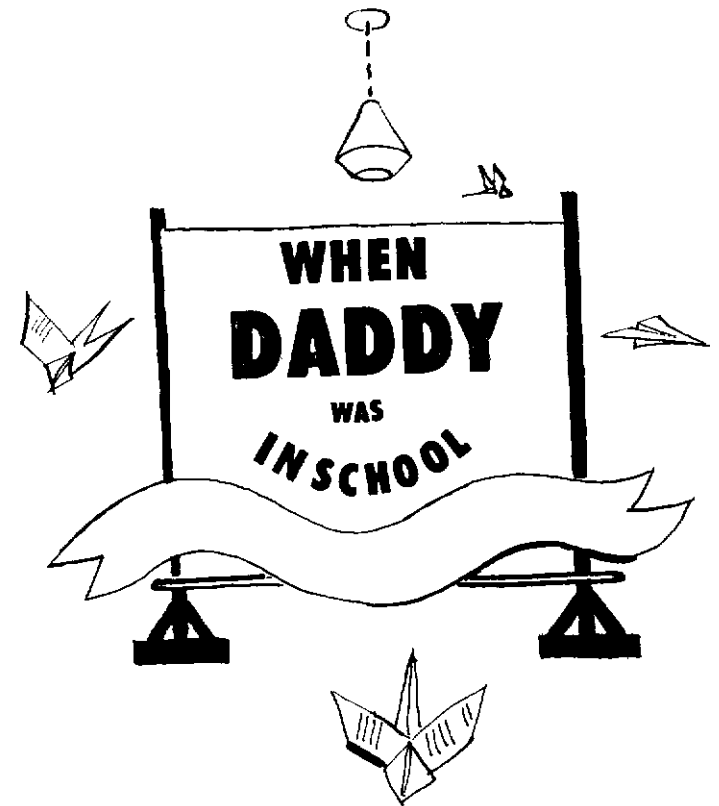
"So was I," said little Daddy.

Then everyone laughed again.

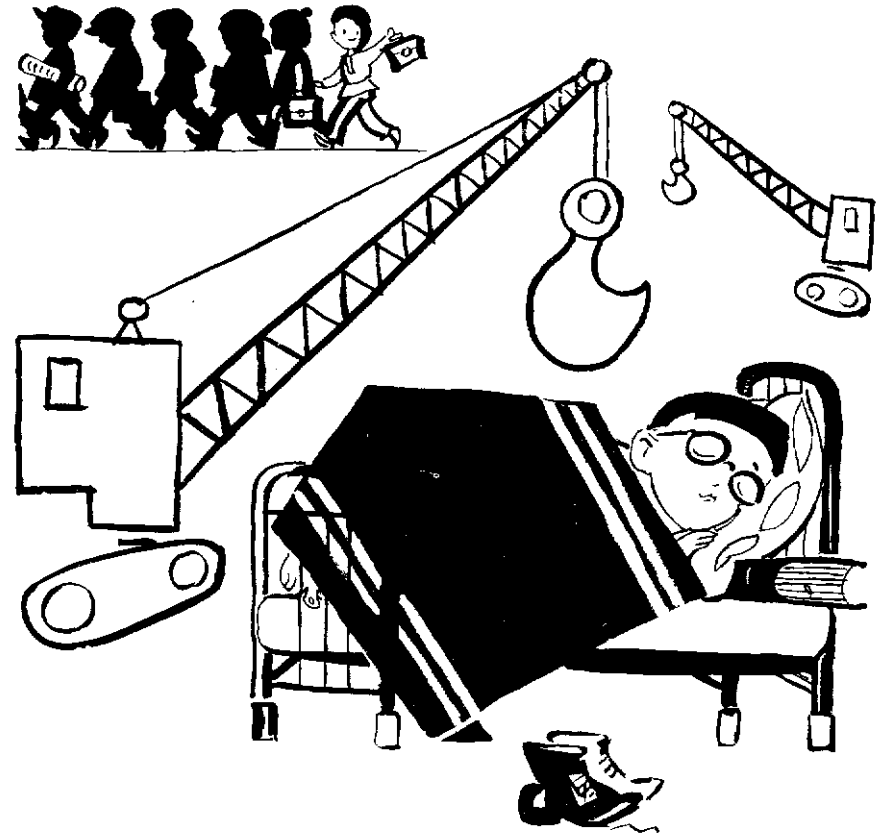
“Now, children,” the teacher said, “I want you to remember that when you feel like crying, try to laugh. That’s a piece of advice that will serve you well for the rest of your lives. Now let’s get down to the lesson.”

That first day Daddy discovered that he could read better than anyone else in his class. He also discovered that his penmanship was worse than anyone else’s. However, when everyone else discovered that he was best at talking all through the lesson, the teacher shook her finger at him.

She was a very good teacher. She was strict, but she was kind. It was fun having her teach them. Little Daddy remembered her advice all his life. After all, this was his very first day of school. There were a lot of other days afterwards. There were lots of funny, sad, good, and bad things that happened to little Daddy when he was in school. But that’s another story.



## HOW DADDY WAS ALWAYS LATE



When Daddy was a little boy, he went to school just like any other little girl or boy.

All the other children in his school arrived before the bell rang. But little Daddy was always late. Some-

times he even managed to miss the first lesson altogether. This surprised the teacher no end. She said she'd never had such a pupil before. The principal said he was probably one of a kind, not to be found in any other school, either.

"He's always late!" the principal said. "His parents say they can't do anything about it. I've spoken to them twice."

True enough, little Daddy's parents couldn't do a thing. It was the same old story every evening.

"Have you done your homework?" Grandma would ask.

"Wait a sec," little Daddy would reply.

"Stop reading and start your homework immediately!" Grandpa would say.

"Just one more page," little Daddy would plead.

Little Daddy would finish the page and then start a new one. He just couldn't put down an interesting book and start doing his boring lessons.

"Put that book down!"

"Wait a sec."

"Put that book down!"

"Wait a sec."

Finally, his parents would lose their patience, and either Grandpa or Grandma would snatch little Daddy's book from him.

"You'll end up being a lazy good-for-nothing," they scolded.

Little Daddy would feel very offended. He'd yell and wail, and demand his book back. He'd say he wouldn't start his homework unless they gave it back to him.

And so the evening would drag on. When little Daddy would finally sit down to do his homework, he'd doze off. His parents would wake him up. Then he'd doze off again. But they'd wake him up again, and again. That's why he usually did his homework in a daze. By the time he'd be through, it would really be late. Grandpa and Grandma would both be exhausted.

In the morning it was quite a different story.

"Get up!" Grandma would say.

"Wait a sec," little Daddy would mumble.

"Get up!" Grandpa would shout.

"Wait a sec."

"You'll be late!"

Everyone knows how hard it is to get up early in the morning if you went to bed late the night before. You have all your sweetest dreams in the morning. Especially if you have to go to school.

Time marched steadily on, while little Daddy stretched and yawned, washed up, pulled his clothes

on sleepily, dozed through his breakfast and finally managed to get his books together. At last he was out of the house and running to school, his heart sinking every time he looked at a street clock on the way.

When little Daddy would finally burst breathlessly into the classroom, even his teacher would laugh. "Ah, here's our sleepyhead!" she'd say. And that hurt.

A cartoon of little Daddy was put in the school wall newspaper. He was pictured sound asleep in bed, with his father and mother pouring two big pails of water over him. There was a huge alarm clock pulling little Daddy by one ear, and a boy blowing a trumpet into his other ear. The caption under the cartoon read: "A Schoolday Lullaby". Although it made little Daddy angry, he was still always late for school.

Since little Daddy left his homework for the end of the day, he never did it well. And since he was always late, he often missed the teacher's explanation of a new topic. This made it harder for him to understand what the rest of the class was doing. Besides, he was forever in a rush, forever late, forever running and getting excited. All this was very bad for him. But still, he was always late.

I'd love to tell you that the teachers scolded and the other children teased little Daddy until one fine

day he came to school earlier than anyone else and was never late again.

But I don't want to lie.

Daddy has been late all his life. When he was a little boy, he was late for school. Then he was late for his college classes. Then he was late for work. Little Daddy was punished when he was a little boy. He was scolded and shamed. When he grew older, he lost out on many things in life because of this awful habit. He was late to the theater and missed the first act. He was often so late to parties that he was never invited again. He was late for business appointments and would ruin the whole affair.

Many a time he welcomed in the New Year alone on a deserted street, late again for the New Year's party he was rushing to. Many people waited for him in vain.

His friends love to tell funny stories about his being late. Even now Daddy doesn't know how to walk slowly. He's always in a hurry, because he's used to being late. At night he even dreams he's late for some appointment. He shudders and moans in his sleep. Sometimes he dreams that he's a little boy again, and that he's running to school, but when he looks up at the clock in his dream, it's still early! Everyone congratulates him. The principal hands him a bouquet

of flowers. They hang his picture in the school auditorium. A band plays for him. However, he always wakes up at this point and thinks that if he were a little boy again, he'd never be late for school.

## HOW DADDY WENT TO THE MOVIES



When Daddy was a little boy, he wasn't allowed to go to the movies. His parents said: "You're too young. You've lots of time. There's nothing for you to see there anyway."

That's what Grandpa and Grandma said. And his

aunt would add: "If you ask me, the movies are just a hotbed of infection. There's nothing but measles, scarlet fever and whooping cough there, to say nothing of diphtheria."

And Auntie would be off on a long lecture about diphtheria. In vain did little Daddy beg them to let him go. They wouldn't even listen when he said that all his friends had been going to the movies for ages, and none of them had got the measles, scarlet fever or whooping cough, to say nothing of diphtheria there. The answer was always the same:

"When you start in school, it won't matter any more. We won't be able to keep you from catching all kinds of diseases then. You'll go to the movies as often as you like then."

Little Daddy saw all the latest films, as presented by his friends. The boys would act out the scenes in which Douglas Fairbanks galloped through *The Mark of Zero*, in which he fenced, in which he appeared in a black mask and slayed all his enemies. They imitated Charlie Chaplin, the comedian Igor Ilyinsky, Pat who was tall and skinny, and small, roly-poly Patachon. They did their best. They galloped around, imitating the famous cowboy William Hart. One day little Daddy heard the grown-ups saying that Mary Pickford had a charming smile.

"What kind of a smile does she have?" little Daddy asked his friends. One of the boys showed him just how Mary Pickford smiled. He tried real hard, and everybody said his smile was much better than Mary Pickford's. Especially since she'd been smiling for so many years and got paid for it, while this was only his second day at it, and he was doing it for free, for a friend.

Little Daddy knew that the boys wanted to cheer him up, but this only made him want to go to the movies even more.

The happy day finally dawned. Little Daddy became a schoolboy. The very first Sunday his teacher took the class to see a matinée performance of *Little Red Devils*. Little Daddy had read the book. He was dying to see the young scouts, the terrible Makhno, and all the exciting and wonderful adventures on the screen.

The movie theater was not far from little Daddy's house. Even little Uncle Vic knew where it was. That's why he was there before little Daddy, who was late, and had already made friends with all of little Daddy's class. The teacher thought he was very cute. When little Daddy saw his kid brother there, he didn't say a word. He just grabbed him by the collar and dragged him off. Little Uncle Vic began to howl.

The three candies he had in his mouth fell out. The girls in little Daddy's class had been treating him, and little Uncle Vic was a very polite boy. If someone felt like giving him a candy, he never refused.

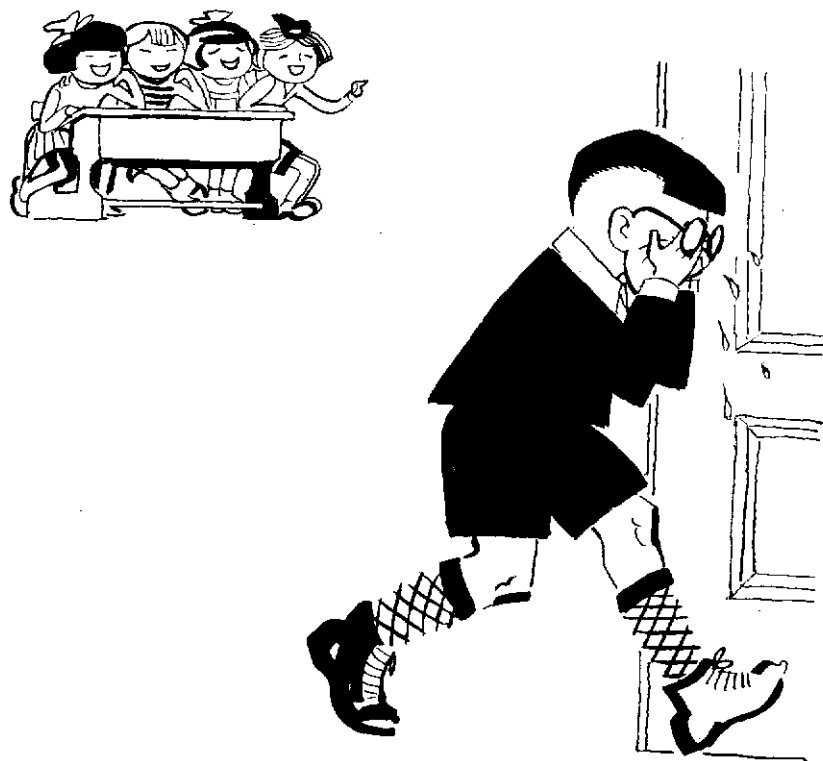
Little Uncle Vic cried so hard that all the other kids in little Daddy's class took his side. Even the teacher said, "Let him come with us. I'll be responsible for him."

So little Daddy let go of his brother's collar. They all went in. Children were rushing through the doors from all sides. Happy little Uncle Vic was hopping ahead of everyone like a rabbit. Naturally, he tripped and fell. Little Daddy was right behind him. He stumbled over his kid brother and fell on top of him. Then the rest of little Daddy's class, rushing along behind them, fell on top of them, one after another. It was awful, especially for those who were on the bottom of the pile. Little Uncle Vic, who had been hopping like a rabbit, was now squealing like a pig. Little Daddy was howling, too. Just then his teacher and two other teachers from another school came running to the rescue. They stopped the crowd. They unscrambled the pile of children. They picked up little Daddy and little Uncle Vic, who were on the very bottom, and since they were all black-and-blue, they were sent home as casualties. At the sight of them Auntie cried, "See? I told you so!"

After that little Daddy wasn't allowed to go to the movies for a very long time. They finally did let him go, though, and he saw *Little Red Devils*. And many other films besides. He still loves to go to the movies. So does Uncle Vic.



## HOW THE GIRLS WERE MEAN TO DADDY



When Daddy was a little schoolboy, this is what usually happened: the bell would ring, recess would end, and all the corridors would be empty. The children would all take their seats, but little Daddy would be standing outside the classroom door, crying

bitterly, while all his classmates laughed and giggled. When the teacher entered, she'd know exactly what the matter was.

"What is it?" she'd say with a smile. "Have the girls been teasing you again?" And little Daddy would nod.

Why did the girls tease little Daddy? And what was it they did?

It was all very simple. As everyone trooped in from recess, three or four girls would crowd in behind little Daddy's desk and begin to giggle. He was a very shy and quiet boy. Masha was the only girl he'd ever played with. He always shied away from girls. They soon noticed this and began to tease him. That's how it had all begun. It's not too bad if you have to sit next to a girl, but when four of them are sitting at your desk and giggling, that's something else again. If the rest of the class is laughing, too, well, that's just about the end. And so little Daddy would run out of the classroom and stand behind the door, weeping bitterly. He did look silly. The other boys would say,

"Why d'you pay attention to them? Chase them away! Shove her off! And do it hard, so's it'll be a lesson to her!" And somebody would shove the girl who'd been laughing the loudest off little Daddy's seat. She was a very lively girl. And she was really very nice. Her name was Tamara. Or was it Galya?

Or Vera, or Lucy? No, it was Valya. And she probably knew that little Daddy liked her best of all the girls in his class. Girls always know about such things. Maybe that's why she laughed so loudly. But it made little Daddy cry.

Finally, the teacher got fed up with what was going on. One day she entered the classroom with weeping little Daddy in tow and said, "There are sixteen girls and eighteen boys in this class. The sixteen girls keep teasing the same boy all the time. What I'd like to know is: why don't they tease the other seventeen boys? Who knows the answer?"

Everyone laughed. Then the teacher said,

"Why do they only tease this one boy? I'm very serious, and I want an answer."

Everyone was silent. A few of the girls giggled. One of the boys raised his hand and said,

"Because he cries when they tease him."

"Right," the teacher said. "Remember, we agreed that it's better to laugh than to cry. D'you understand?" she asked little Daddy.

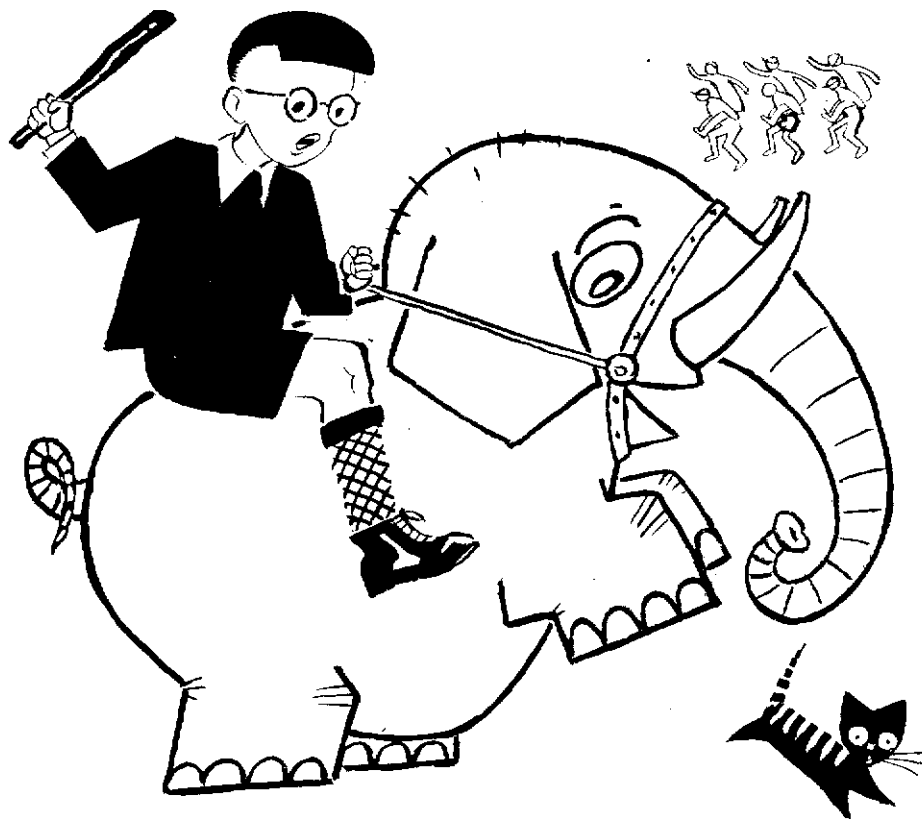
"Yes," he sniffled.

"Then try to remember it," she said. "If you don't, girls will be teasing you all your life."

Little Daddy didn't want such a terrible thing to happen to him. He didn't cry the next time the four girls crowded in at his desk and began to giggle. He

simply walked down the row and took a seat at the desk of the girl whom he liked best of all. Then everyone began to laugh at her. She didn't cry, but she stopped laughing. The girls stopped teasing little Daddy. They even became friends. After that, only the boys gave him a hard time. But boys will be boys, and they just love to fight.

## HOW DADDY WENT TIGER-HUNTING



When Daddy was a little schoolboy, he once went tiger-hunting. The tiger was a little tiger, and though it didn't go to school, it lived in the school yard. This is how it all came about.

One afternoon in spring, when school was out,

little Daddy and his friends were sitting in the sun in the school yard. They were just talking, like boys do everywhere, about this and that, and everything. They were talking about soccer, and tomorrow's test, and yesterday's fight, and *The Thief of Baghdad*, and their favorite ice cream flavors, and about which of them were going to camp and who would have to spend a boring summer in the country with their parents. While they were talking, little Daddy was reading a book. I don't know what the book was about, but it was probably an adventure story. That's why when everyone stopped talking for a moment, little Daddy suddenly said, "Wouldn't it be great to go tiger-hunting!"

The other boys laughed.

"Take me along," Misha said.

"And me! Me, too!" all the other boys chimed in.

Then one of the boys said, "Hey! Let's all go! Our whole class!"

Everybody liked the idea.

"But how d'you hunt tigers?" Misha wanted to know.

"It's very easy," little Daddy said. "First, you ride your elephants into the jungle. It's full of monkeys, and bananas, and parrots."

"And donkeys, and bandannas, and carrots," Misha teased. "Tell us about the tiger part."

"That's what I'm trying to do. The tiger's hiding in the jungle. Then it jumps out and attacks the elephants. Then everybody takes aim and fires at it. After that, one of the elephants winds its trunk around the tiger, raises it up, smashes it down and tramples it. See? It's all right here on this picture."

The boys studied the picture. Then Misha said, "I know! You, you, and you will be the elephants. And we'll be the hunters. The yard is the jungle. Every hunter gets a stick for a gun. Ready, everybody? Then get on your elephants, and let's go! There's the tiger! See its stripes?"

"Nay, that's only a kitten," little Daddy said.

"Shut up! You don't know what you're talking about. Now listen to me, men! Elephants, forward!"

Little Daddy was a hunter. As he sat astride his elephant, he saw the little striped kitten gaze up at the elephants and hunters in wonder. It was so surprised it didn't even try to run away.

"Fire!" Misha shouted.

Sticks rained down upon the poor kitten. Before little Daddy knew what he was doing, he, too, threw his stick. Luckily, he missed. The little kitten dashed off in terror. Just then one of the sticks hit it on the head. The kitten meowed and rolled over. Its legs jerked. Then it was still.

"We killed the tiger!" Misha shouted. But then one of the boys said, "The kitten's dead."

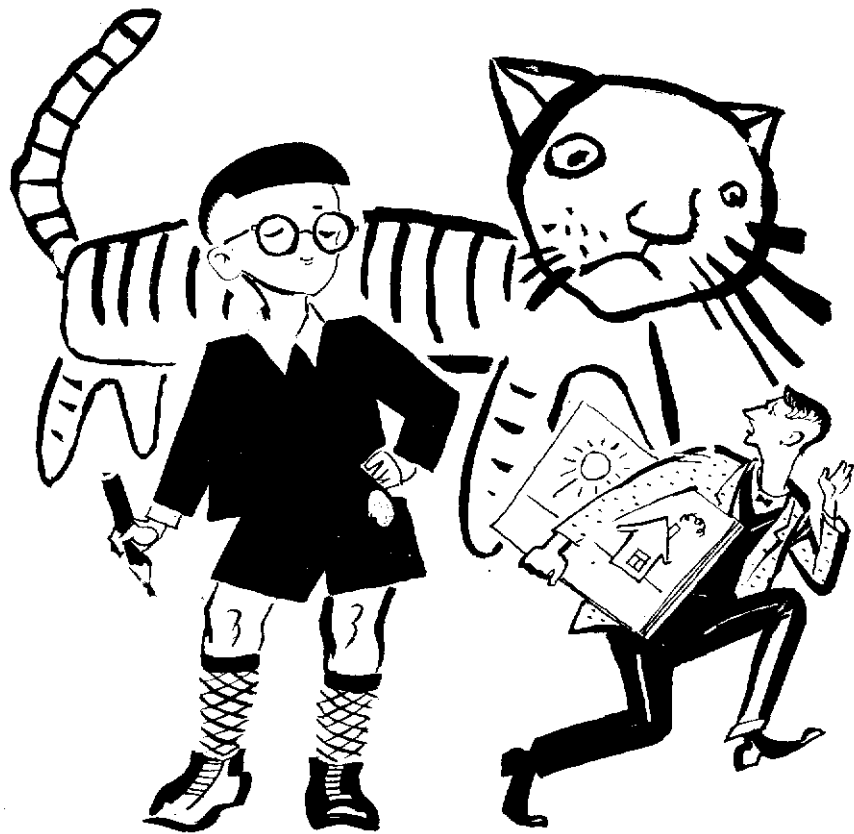
They all ran to look at it.

The little striped ball of fur was very still. It suddenly came home to little Daddy that the kitten had been alive, and now it was dead. It would never run, or jump, or play with other kittens any more. It would never grow up to be a cat. It would never catch mice, or meow on the roof. It was all over now. The kitten hadn't wanted to play tiger-hunt at all. But no one had bothered to ask it whether it did or not. The boys stood around the dead kitten in silence.

All of a sudden they heard someone cry,

"Oh! My kitty! My little kitty!" It was a little girl wearing a big blue hairbow. She picked her kitten up and carried it home. The boys all trudged home, too. They were so ashamed, they couldn't even look at each other. From then on little Daddy never hurt a cat, or a dog, or any other animal in his life. And he's still sorry about that little striped kitten.

## HOW DADDY USED TO DRAW



When Daddy was a little boy, he loved to draw. And when he was given a box of colored pencils, he spent all his days drawing. He drew little houses. Each little house had a chimney. There was smoke coming out of each chimney. There was a tree beside each house. There was a bird in each tree. All

the houses were red. All the roofs were yellow. All the chimneys were black. And the smoke coming out of each chimney was light-blue and pink. All the trees were blue, and all the birds were green. A yellow sun shone in the lavender sky. A white moon floated beside the sun. It was surrounded by gold and white stars. It was a pretty picture, but everyone who saw it said, "Where'd you ever see blue trees and green birds?"

And little Daddy would say, "In my picture."

Before little Daddy started in school, he thought he knew how to draw very well. But everyone at school thought differently. He drew so poorly that his drawing teacher never said a word to him. He'd say: "That's good", or "That's no good", or "Straighten this line" to the other children, but he never even said "That's no good" to little Daddy. As he passed little Daddy's desk and looked at his drawing, his face would become all puckered. You'd think he'd just bitten into a lemon.

Some of the girls felt sorry for little Daddy. When the teacher turned his back, they'd quickly draw something in little Daddy's drawing book. They tried to do their worst. But no one could draw as badly as little Daddy. The teacher would notice the difference immediately, and he'd say, "Who drew this?"

"Not me," little Daddy would answer truthfully.

"I can see that for myself," his teacher would say. "But I want to know who helped you. You'll never learn to draw this way. You have to do it yourself."

"I'll do it myself now," little Daddy would reply, and he'd draw something in his drawing book. The teacher would wince again.

"Now I can see that's your drawing," he'd say.

At the next parents' meeting the drawing teacher made a little speech.

"Dear parents!" he said. "Five of my pupils have excellent marks in drawing."

And he called out their names.

"Most of the children have good marks. There are several who are doing poorly."

And he named three more children.

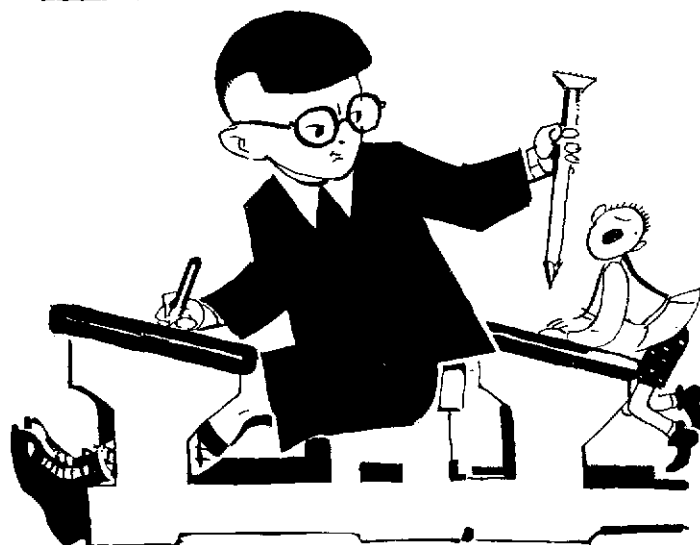
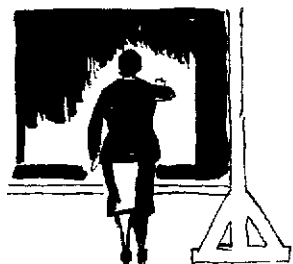
"But there's one boy —"and here he made a sour face and named little Daddy. "It's not that he's doing poorly. It's just that I think it's some sort of a mental block. Something that prevents him from learning how to draw."

Grandma and Grandpa were very disappointed. Still, it was the honest truth. Years passed. Daddy graduated from school, and then from college. In all this time he'd only learned to draw a cat. But any child can draw a cat. Even a little child. Daddy's

very envious of them, because their cats are much better than his. He did once see an artist who drew as poorly as he did, but that man said, "This is how I see this face, this tree, and this horse. And this is how I draw them."

What a pity little Daddy never thought of saying that to his drawing teacher.

## HOW DADDY FOOLED HIS TEACHER



When Daddy was a little schoolboy, he liked his teacher very much. All his classmates liked her, too. She was tall and plain-looking, and always wore dark dresses. The grown-ups said she was not at all attractive. But little Daddy thought she was very beautiful.

Her name was Maria Petrovna. She was very friendly, but she was also strict. Most important, she was a very fair person. All the children knew that if she was angry, they really were to blame. There always had to be a good reason for her being angry. She never had any special pets in the class. She liked all her pupils. She could be angry at each and every one of them if they didn't do their homework, or if they were noisy in class. Everyone knew she'd been teaching for twenty years. And everyone knew she hated braggarts, tattle-tales and greedy children.

Maria Petrovna's lessons were always very interesting. That's why the children were usually very quiet in class. One day someone stuck a pin in little Daddy's back.

"Oww!" he yelled.

"What's the matter?" the teacher said.

Little Daddy said nothing.

"Please leave the room!" his teacher then said.

Little Daddy rose and headed for the door. Just then two girls shouted,

"It's not his fault!"

"Zaichikov pricked him with a pin!"

Then the teacher said, "I want the one who yelled to leave the room, the one who pricked him to leave the room, and the ones who tattled to leave the room. Do you agree with me, children?"

And everyone shouted, "Yes!"

And so the two girls, little Daddy and Zaichikov all trooped out together.

Little Daddy was crying. He was upset, because he'd been pricked to begin with, and then sent out of the classroom. Although Zaichikov was laughing at the girls and at little Daddy, you could see he wasn't really feeling as happy as he pretended to be. The girls were neither laughing nor crying. But they both looked unhappy.

The next day little Daddy brought a big nail to school, and when the teacher turned her back and began writing on the blackboard, little Daddy took the nail from his pocket and stuck it in Zaichikov's hand. Zaichikov howled so loudly he scared little Daddy. Maria Petrovna was very angry.

"Is that you again, Zaichikov?" she said.

"No. He stuck me," Zaichikov whined, holding up his hand for her to see.

"Yesterday you pricked someone, and today someone stuck you. That's very interesting. Who stuck Zaichikov?"

All the children turned to look at little Daddy, but no one said a word. No one wanted to be a tattletale. Even Zaichikov kept quiet. He just sniffled.

"Well, who was it?" Maria Petrovna said in her

sternest voice. Little Daddy was so scared he suddenly heard himself saying,

"I didn't stick him."

And the teacher said, "What didn't you stick him with?"

And little Daddy quickly replied, "With this nail."

Everyone burst out laughing. They made so much noise that the teacher from the next room came in. He said,

"What's the happy occasion?"

And Maria Petrovna replied, "We're happy, because one boy didn't stick another boy with this nail, and because the other boy didn't cry out, and because no one tattled. And also because no one tried to fool their old teacher."

The children felt very much ashamed of themselves. Everyone glared at little Daddy. He rose and said,

"Yesterday he pricked me, and I yelled. Today I stuck him, and he yelled. And I lied." Little Daddy paused and added, "I won't do it again."

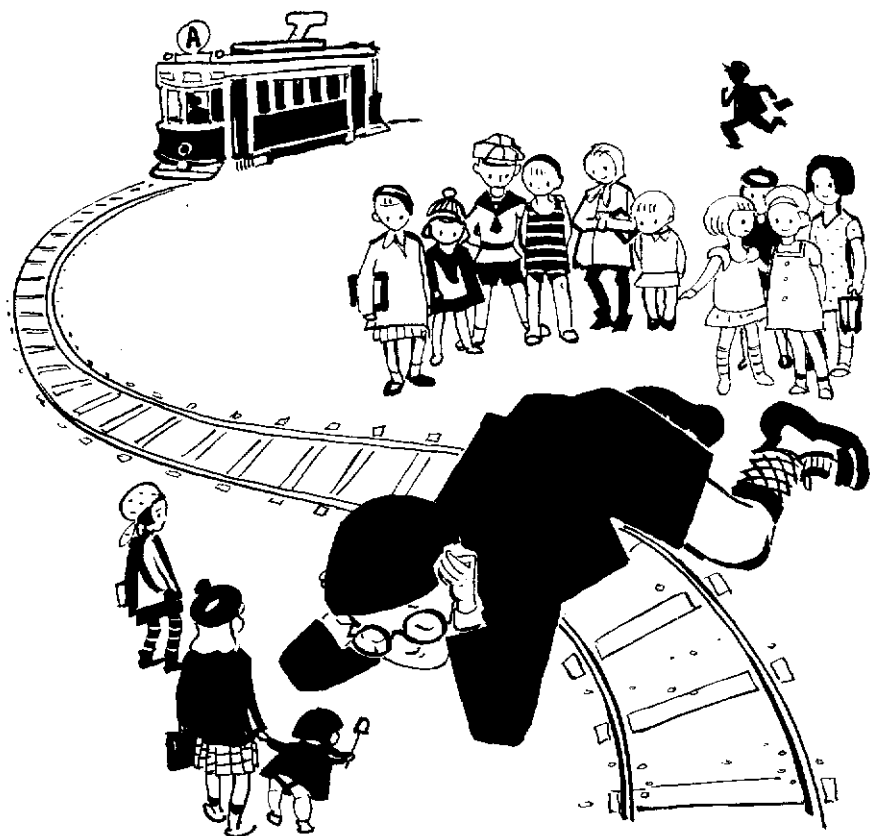
"I won't either," Zaichikov said, but since he shook his fist at little Daddy, no one believed him.

"There's nothing worse than lying," Maria Petrovna said.

And little Daddy never lied to her again. Hardly ever.



## HOW DADDY STOPPED THE TROLLEY CAR



When Daddy was a little schoolboy, he had a friend and classmate named Misha.

Misha was full of mischief. A big crowd always gathered around him at recess. Everyone wanted to hear Misha meow, bark, buzz like a bee, or grunt

like a pig. He was especially good at crowing. He could put on a fine show. First, he'd imitate a young rooster trying to crow. The "cock-a-" part would come out fine, but the "doodle-doo" part wouldn't. But then the little rooster would fly to the top of a fence, crow loudly for the first time in its life, and flap its wings. At this, Misha would pull his shirt and undershirt out of his trousers and slap his palm against his naked stomach. It sounded just like a rooster flapping its wings. But recess was never long enough for Misha to put on a full show. That's why a kitten would sometimes start meowing or a baby pig would start squealing right in the middle of a lesson.

"Misha Gorbunov!" the teacher would say, "Stop that squealing and meowing!" or "I don't want any more clucking, Misha!" or "Did you hear me? Stop that barking!" or "How long are you going to grunt?" or "Is that you chirping again?" or "One more buzz and out you go!"

But Misha was rarely sent out of the room. The teacher liked him and often laughed at his pranks. Once even the principal couldn't help laughing, with everyone looking, too. It happened when he summoned Misha to his office and gave him a long lecture on his mischief-making. He ended by saying,

"You may go now, but I don't want to ever see you set foot in here again."

So Misha did a handstand and walked out of the principal's office on his hands. True, the principal summoned his parents after that, but everyone had seen him laughing.

One day after school Misha said, "D'you want to see me stop a trolley car?"

Naturally, everyone shouted, "Yes!"

"Let's go!" Misha said.

All the boys flocked out after him. The trolley line was not far from the school.

"Stand here and watch," Misha said.

When the trolley car appeared in the distance, Misha lay down across the tracks and covered his head with his arms. The trolley was approaching very quickly. The conductor saw the boy lying on the tracks and rang the shrill bell.

Misha didn't move. The trolley was getting closer and closer. The bell shrilled louder and louder. The rest of the boys were terrified. When the trolley got very close, it stopped. The moment the bell stopped ringing, Misha jumped to his feet and scampered off and away up a small side street. All the conductor could do was shake his fist at him. Then the trolley car rolled on. The boys surrounded Misha. They were all talking excitedly.

"Weren't you scared?"

"What's there to be scared of?" he said.

"But what if he didn't stop?"

"He'd go to jail."

"But what if he caught you?"

"He's not allowed to leave the trolley car."

You could see Misha had it all planned out beforehand.

The next day Kolya stopped the trolley. The day after, it was Kostya. After that, it was the Sikorsky twins' turn. Then someone invited the girls to come and watch. And that was the end of little Daddy. The day dawned when every single boy except him had stopped the trolley, and the girls knew it. Now it was little Daddy's turn. When word got around that he was going to lie down on the tracks and stop the trolley, lots of girls from other classes also came to watch the show. After all, little Daddy was a very quiet boy, and they all wanted to see him try to stop the trolley car.

The crowd of children that had gathered to watch him was so big that the conductor saw it from afar. As little Daddy lay there on the tracks with his eyes shut tight and his hands clapped over his ears, the conductor calmly stopped the trolley, jumped down and rushed at him. Little Daddy decided that the trolley hadn't stopped and had run him over. He didn't realize it was the conductor shaking him and shouting:

“Aha! I’ve got you at last!”

All the other children scattered. Misha was the only one to stop and shout from the side street, “You’ve no right to!”

But no one listened to him.

Little Daddy was taken to the militia station. They wrote down his address. Grandma, Grandpa and the principal were summoned to the precinct. Then little Daddy was punished at home and shamed at school. There was an article about him in the school newspaper. The principal, Grandpa and Grandma all thought that little Daddy was the only one who had been lying on the tracks, stopping the trolley car every day. Little Daddy was dying to tell them that Misha, and Kolya, and Kostya, and the Sikorsky twins had all stopped the trolley, too. But he didn’t tell on them.

They never let him live it down, because he was the only one who’d ever been caught. Even his friend Misha said,

“If you don’t know how to do a thing right, don’t.”

None of the kids ever lay down across the tracks after that. Daddy is happy he was caught then, for the trolley car never ran anyone over. And that really was a miracle.

## HOW DADDY KILLED A SNAKE



When Daddy was a little schoolboy, he killed a snake. This is how it happened. One day after school the teacher said, “Children! We’re going to the woods tomorrow. We’ll walk on the grass, and

you can play in the sunny clearings. Who wants to go?"

All the children raised their hands. So did little Daddy.

The teacher smiled and said, "Who's against the motion?"

They all raised their hands again. And so did little Daddy.

The teacher was very surprised.

"What's this supposed to mean?" she asked. "Do you want to go for a walk in the woods or not?"

"Yes!" they all shouted.

"Then why'd you vote not to?"

No one knew why. Finally one of the girls said,

"Because we like to vote."

Then everybody laughed, and the teacher laughed, too. She said, "I see you're all still little sillies. Now don't forget to bring your lunches along. There's no food in the woods. Class is dismissed."

All the children rose.

Suddenly, little Daddy raised his hand again.

"Now what?" the teacher asked. "You really do like to vote, don't you?"

"Can I take my shovel along?"

"Since you all like to vote so much, we'll put it to a vote. Who says he takes his shovel?"

Every hand went up.

"It's unanimous," the teacher said.

And so little Daddy took his shovel along on their trip to the woods. After all, he was still a very little boy, and he liked his shovel. He was glad everyone had voted for him to take it.

It was lovely in the woods. The trees were green, and the new grass was so soft that little Daddy gazed at it in wonder.

"Children, look at this tree," the teacher said. "Does anyone know what kind of a tree this is?"

"It's an oak! An oak!" they all shouted.

And the girl who liked to vote (her name was Olya) said, "It's an old and mighty oak." No one knew why she had said that. Even the teacher seemed surprised. Then she said,

"What tree is this?"

And everyone shouted, "It's a little birch tree!"

When little Daddy saw Olya open her mouth to say something, he said in an undertone, "It's a mighty young little birch tree!"

Olya stuck her tongue out at little Daddy, and little Daddy said in a loud voice,

"A mighty young tongue!"

Everyone laughed, but the teacher said,

"I'll have to ask any child who interrupts the lesson to leave the woods."

She said it so sternly that everyone stopped talking, but then she herself laughed.

Then she told the children about the many different trees that grew in the north and about the trees that grew in the south.

Then someone found a ladybug, and everyone chanted,

*Ladybug, ladybug,  
Fly away!  
Your house is on fire,  
And your children are crying!*

But the ladybug didn't want to fly away. All of a sudden, they all remembered about their lunches and began feeling very hungry. It was fun having a picnic lunch in a clearing in the woods. They found a large tree stump for a table. Everyone treated each other, and when the teacher took a box of candy from her bag, a shout went up.

Suddenly someone screamed, "There's a snake! A snake!"

It was Olya. She'd been sitting at the edge of the clearing, next to little Daddy. She jumped up and began screaming louder and louder,

"Help! Mommy!"

Little Daddy jumped up, too. A grayish-green snake with black markings was slithering along near Olya. He'd never seen a live snake before, and he be-

came so frightened that he hit it with his sharp shovel as hard as he could, chopping the snake in two. Olya was still shrieking. Now all the girls began to scream.

The teacher was watching little Daddy with interest. Little Daddy was hard at work. First, he made four snakes of the two, and then he made eight of the four. He would probably have gone on to make sixteen, and even thirty-two, but the teacher came over to him and took his hand firmly.

"That's enough! It's a harmless grass snake," she said. "It's not poisonous at all."

Little Daddy stopped chopping. The girls stopped screaming. But not Olya.

"It's a grass snake! A grass snake!" she shrieked.

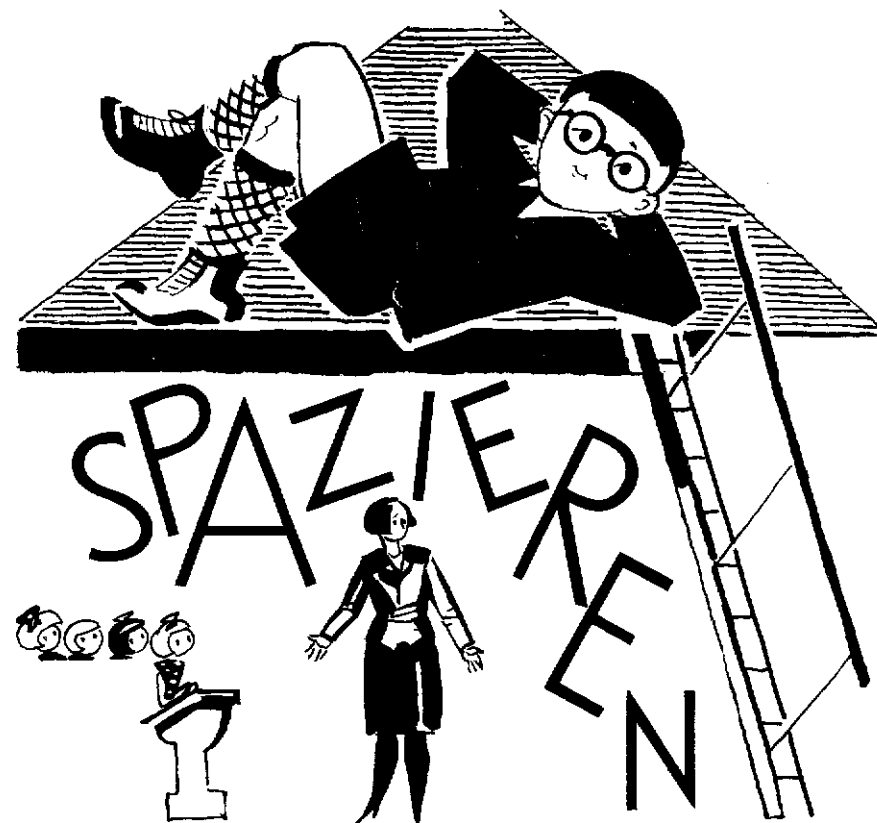
By now, all the boys were shouting.

"Help! Help!" they shouted, "Help! It's a snake!"

"Be quiet, all of you!" the teacher said. Then, when they had all finally calmed down, she said, "Grass snakes aren't poisonous. They destroy garden pests and mice, and you should never kill them. You must learn to tell a grass snake from a poisonous one. And also remember to try not to squeal like babies before you know what you're squealing about. If a boy thought it was a poisonous snake and didn't run away, but stayed to defend his friend, he's a very brave boy, though you really don't have to chop a snake into a hundred pieces."

Then everyone laughed. Little Daddy threw his shovel into the bushes. For a long time afterwards his classmates would shout, "Help! It's a grass snake!", though he felt they should be teasing Olya, not him. That was the last snake he ever killed.

## HOW DADDY FAILED TO LEARN GERMAN



When Daddy was a little schoolboy, he got all kinds of marks. He had a B in Russian, a C in arithmetic, a D in penmanship and an F in drawing. The drawing teacher promised him another F if he didn't improve.

One day a new teacher entered the classroom. She was very nice. She was young and beautiful, and smiling, and she had on a very pretty dress.

"My name is Elena Ivanovna. What's yours?" she asked and smiled. And they all began to shout,

"Zhenya!"

"Zina!"

"Liza!"

"Misha!"

"Kolya!"

Elena Ivanovna pressed her hands to her ears. When they'd all stopped shouting, she said, "I'm going to teach you German. Would you like to learn German?"

"Yes! Yes!" the whole class shouted.

And so little Daddy began learning German. At first, he liked the idea that "chair" in German was *der Stuhl*, that "table" was *der Tisch*, that "book" was *das Buch*, that "boy" was *der Knabe*, and that "girl" was *das Mädchen*.

It was like a game, and everyone was interested. But when they started conjugating and declining, some of the *Knabe* and *Mädchen* became bored. They realized they'd have to study hard if they wanted to know German. It wasn't a game after all. It was a subject just like arithmetic or Russian. Elena Ivanovna tried her best to make the lessons interesting.

She brought books full of funny stories in German to class. She taught the children German songs and told them simple jokes in German. Those pupils who really studied had lots of fun. But those who did not could not understand her. Naturally, they were bored. They hardly ever looked into *das Buch* and were as silent as *der Tisch* when Elena Ivanovna called on them.

Sometimes, just before the German lesson was to begin, a wild cry would go up:

"*Ich habe spazieren!*" (which meant: "I have to walk!") But what it really meant was: "Let's get out of here!" At the first sound of this cry, many of the boys would join in. Poor Elena Ivanovna would come to class to find that all the boys had bolted: they were *spazieren*, and only the girls had remained for the lesson. She was very unhappy. Little Daddy was one of the *spazieren* boys.

He did not escape to make Elena Ivanovna unhappy. It was simply fun to play hooky, to hide from her, the principal and the teachers in the school attic. It was much more fun to be up in the attic than to be sitting in the classroom, not knowing the lesson, so that in reply to Elena Ivanovna's question "*Haben Sie ein Federmesser?*" (which meant: "Do you have a penknife?") he would just stand there dumbly and finally say: "*Ich nicht —*". The girls would titter.

Little Daddy didn't like to be a laughingstock. He preferred to laugh at others. If he'd had any sense, he'd have started studying German. But little Daddy was mad at his German teacher. He was mad at the German language in general. But he found a way of getting even with it. Little Daddy never studied German as he should have. He never studied French properly in another school. Then he hardly studied English at all in college. And now Daddy doesn't know a single foreign language. He realizes he's the loser. He can't read many of his favorite books in the language in which they were written. Besides, he's often introduced to people from other countries. Though their Russian is very poor, they're all studying it, and so they ask Daddy,

"Do you speak English?" "*Sprechen Sie Deutsch?*" "*Parlez-vous français?*" Daddy can only shake his head. All he can say is: "*Ich nicht.*"

## HOW DADDY WROTE TWO COMPOSITIONS



When Daddy was a little schoolboy, one of his friends was named Vasya. He lived next door to little Daddy. They always walked to school together, and they always walked home together. They shared a double desk in school. Vasya could do the arithmetic



problems faster than anyone else in his class. He helped little Daddy with his arithmetic. Little Daddy helped Vasya with his compositions. They were very pleased with each other, and if they ever fought, they only fought each other.

One day the teacher said the assignment for the next day would be a composition entitled: "How I Spent the Summer".

"I don't know what to write," Vasya said to little Daddy.

"Where'd you spend the summer?"

"In the country."

"Well, then, write about the country."

"What about?"

"What did you do there?"

"Nothing special. I went swimming, and fishing, and walking in the woods."

"That's what you write about," said little Daddy.

In no time Vasya's composition was ready. He showed it to little Daddy. This is what he'd written:

#### *HOW I SPENT THE SUMMER*

*I spent the summer at my grandma's house in the country. I went swimming and fishing and to the woods with the boys. It's nice in the country in the summer.*

"That's no composition," said little Daddy. "Write

about your grandma, about what she's like, what she said, what she did, what songs she sang."

"She didn't sing any songs. She told me stories."

"Well, then, write about the stories she told you. Write about the boys, and about the river, and about the woods."

"I can't write all that," Vasya said. "What if I tell it to you, and then you write it?"

So Vasya told little Daddy all about his grandma, and about the boys, and about the woods, and about the river. Little Daddy wrote a long composition. He tried his best. Vasya thought the composition was great.

"I'll rewrite it," he said. "Meanwhile, you start writing your own composition. It's getting late."

After Vasya left, little Daddy sat down to write his own composition, but he had a hard time doing it. It's no easy job writing a composition on the same topic twice in a row. Little Daddy had also spent his summer in the country. He'd also walked in the woods and gone swimming in the river. But he'd written all about that in Vasya's composition. His problem now was to write a composition that wouldn't be like Vasya's. Otherwise the teacher would surely guess something was wrong. By then it was so late that little Daddy didn't care whether his composition was any good or not. He wrote a composition that wasn't

a bit like Vasya's. In fact, as the teacher said, it wasn't like anything at all.

When she handed out their composition books, she said, "Here are your compositions, children. Vasya's is the best of all. I'll read it aloud."

And she read little Daddy's first composition to the class.

"Good for you, Vasya!" the teacher said. "It's excellent. It's interesting and well-written, and there are no errors. You have a wonderful grandmother and fine friends."

Vasya got all red in the face. He didn't like being praised for something he hadn't done.

Then, for some unknown reason, she looked at little Daddy and said, "And now I'll read you the worst composition." And she read little Daddy's second composition.

Now little Daddy got all red in the face. He didn't like being scolded for something that wasn't his fault.

When the teacher had finished reading little Daddy's composition, she said, "I hope that next time you'll do better, and that Vasya won't do worse. Is that clear?"

"Yes," little Daddy said in a near-whisper.

"Is it clear to you, too, Vasya?" she said.

"Yes," Vasya whispered.

They sat side by side with flaming cheeks, and

none of the other kids could understand what the matter was. Little Daddy and Vasya didn't discuss what had happened, but from then on little Daddy began doing his arithmetic all by himself, and Vasya began writing his compositions all by himself. At first, little Daddy's arithmetic problems were full of mistakes. And Vasya's compositions were not too good. In time, though, they both improved and came to realize that you'll never learn if you don't do your own work yourself. But for many years after they were still the best of friends and still shared a double desk.

## HOW DADDY SPOKE TO THE POET MAYAKOVSKY



When Daddy was a little schoolboy, he once spoke to the poet Mayakovsky, or, rather, the poet Mayakov-sky spoke to him. This is how it happened.

Little Daddy wrote a poem called "The Miner" and showed it to his teacher. She read it and said,

"No one in our school writes poetry. That's why we'll put your poem in our school paper. Good for you. But don't think you're a great poet like Pushkin yet." And little Daddy promised he wouldn't think he was Pushkin.

His poem appeared in the school paper. Since all the pupils read the paper, they discovered there was a boy in the third grade who wrote poetry. The teachers praised him. Some of the kids teased: "He's a poet and don't know it!" All the older girls asked little Daddy to write them each a poem in their autograph books. The editor of the school paper said:

"You'd better write a poem for each issue from now on, or you'll be sorry." And he held his fist up to little Daddy's nose.

When little Daddy grew up, he realized that any poet would love to have an editor who wanted him to keep on writing poems for his paper. But then he just got scared. The editor was a big seventh-grade boy, and his fist was big enough to scare anyone. That's why from then on there was a poem by little Daddy in each issue of the school paper. Sometimes there were even two poems.

Little Daddy's poems were about everything under the sun. There were poems about spring, summer, autumn and winter. There was a poem about the Paris Commune. There were verses about bullies

and cribbing. There was even a poem entitled "The Pugachov Mutiny". It was about the sixth grade cutting their chemistry class. (The chemistry teacher's name was Pugachov.) In two years' time little Daddy had written quite a number of poems, yet he didn't know whether they were really any good. Everyone at school praised him, but he had a feeling he wasn't writing real poetry. Still, he was dying to know whether he'd ever be able to write real poetry. Who could tell him whether he would or not? Only a real poet. The very best and the most famous poet. In a word, Vladimir Mayakovsky.

Little Daddy picked out his best poems and decided to show them to Mayakovsky. But he was afraid to go to see Mayakovsky, because he was still a very little boy. That's why he finally decided to call him up. He found Mayakovsky's telephone number in the telephone book. For the next several afternoons, choosing a time when no one was at home, little Daddy would spread his poems out on the table, take a deep breath, pick up the receiver, tell the operator the number ... and hang up. He was too scared to speak to Mayakovsky.

This went on for a whole week. Little Daddy was awfully ashamed of himself.

Finally, one Sunday evening when Grandpa and Grandma were off to the theater, little Daddy phoned

Mayakovsky again. He clutched the receiver for dear life. This time he didn't hang up. A deep, rumbling voice, one he was to remember for the rest of his life, answered the phone. The voice sounded very angry.

"Who's speaking?" it asked very sternly.

Little Daddy lost his nerve. He choked and couldn't utter a word.

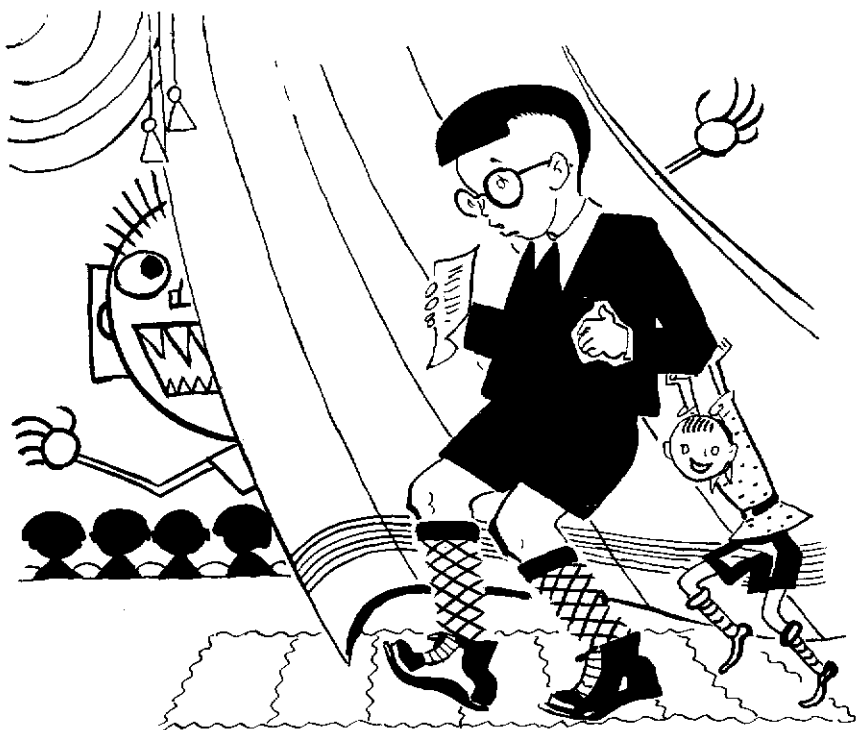
"Who's that fooling around?" the voice thundered. "Some idiot keeps on calling me every day. He just calls and doesn't say anything! Well, say something! Sing to me, dearie!"

Little Daddy was too frightened to speak. He'd missed the moment when he should have apologised, said hello, or at least said something. Now all he could do was listen in terrified silence.

"You just wait, I'll get you yet! Just try phoning me again!"

And Mayakovsky slammed down the receiver. Little Daddy never phoned him again. He never saw him, or heard his voice again. He never even told anyone about what had happened, and for many years only two people knew about the conversation: little Daddy and Vladimir Mayakovsky. Then only little Daddy knew about it. He never forgot his conversation with Mayakovsky. Now you know about it, too.

## HOW DADDY PERFORMED AT A SCHOOL PARTY



When Daddy was a little schoolboy, another school invited his school to be their guests at a school party. It was a return visit. When the other children had performed at a party at little Daddy's school, they'd sung, danced, recited poems and put on some

exhibition calisthenics. They had even produced a scene from Pushkin's *Boris Godunov*. True, the boy who played Grigory got stuck on the windowsill when he was supposed to be jumping out the window, and he managed to pull down the set. But that could've happened to anyone. On the whole, it was a very good show. Now little Daddy's school was going to put on a show for them. They wanted to amaze those kids, but didn't know how to, and so they got together to talk it over.

"We can sing, but so can they. We can dance, but they can, too. Even better than us. But our gymnasts are almost as good as theirs. Even if our pyramid falls down, well, their whole set fell down. We can recite poetry, but they can, too. What can we do that they can't?"

They all started to think.

"We've got Misha," someone finally said.

"Right! He can bark!"

"He can crow!"

"He can meow!"

"He can walk on his hands!"

"Please don't all shout at once!" the teacher said.

When the noise died down, Misha said, "So what? Anybody can do that. If I could write poetry, that'd really be something." And he looked at little Daddy.

Everyone else looked at little Daddy, too.

"How right you are!" the teacher said. "We have our own class poet."

"And they don't!"

Then little Daddy said that he'd never been up on a stage before, and in a strange school at that, to say nothing of the fact that he'd be reciting his own poems.

"Don't you worry about that!" someone shouted.

"So what?" someone else yelled.

"Everything'll be fine," the teacher said. "Just don't you forget you're not Pushkin."

She'd said this to him before, and he'd not forgotten.

The terrible day finally dawned. Little Daddy, a victim of stage fright, set off for the strange school with the gymnasts, dancers and singers. He stood in the wings of the strange stage, looking out at the strange auditorium. It was filled with boys and girls he'd never seen before. There in the front row were a strange principal and strange teachers. They were all staring at the stage. You've probably guessed by now that the auditorium was full of very ordinary boys, and girls, and teachers. They were looking at the stage, laughing and clapping just like everyone did in little Daddy's school. But little Daddy had such a bad case of stage fright in that strange school that everything seemed terrible to him.

"There's nothing to this school," Misha whispered in his ear. "It's the same kind as ours. Even worse." But it was all in vain.

In vain did the girls offer little Daddy candy.

In vain did the teacher say, "Shame on you! You know your own poems by heart, don't you?"

"Yes," little Daddy squeaked.

Finally, the terrible moment arrived.

"You will now hear a poem written and recited by our school poet," he heard the announcer say.

Everyone clapped. Misha gave little Daddy a shove, and little Daddy, dragging his leaden feet, stumbled out. He'd never been so terror-stricken in his life. The auditorium seemed to be spinning around and around. His mouth felt as dry as dust. There was a steady buzz in his ears that sounded like surf pounding.

Little Daddy couldn't make out a single face in the audience. Instead, he saw a great colored splash spinning around. It was clapping. Then everything became very still. Everyone was waiting for his poem. But little Daddy just stood there. (Later on, Misha said that at first little Daddy's been as white as a sheet, then he'd suddenly turned blue, then green, and, finally, his face had become all blotched, with red spots all over it. "You should've seen him!" Misha said to the boys who hadn't gone to the school

party. "He looked like fireworks! I'll bet nobody in that school can do that!") Someone in the audience tittered, and little Daddy finally began to recite the anthem he had written for his school. Everyone listened attentively, but when he got to the refrain, the audience became restless. This was the refrain:

*If you were braver than Robin Hood,  
And looked in every dale and wood,  
You'd never find a finer band  
Than School No. 3 in all the land!*

Since the party was taking place in School No. 9, the children there didn't agree with what little Daddy was saying. Naturally, they felt the honor of their school was at stake, and they began stamping and making humming noises. Little Daddy was too scared to understand what the matter was. He raised his hand and said,

"Please don't interrupt me in the middle of a line. When I finish the stanza, you can make all the noise you want to."

Order was restored. Little Daddy didn't realize he'd sealed his doom by saying that, because the pupils of School No. 9 were no fools. The recital then continued as a game. Little Daddy would recite a stanza, and everyone would be quiet. Then he'd come to the refrain, and pandemonium would break loose. The

children booed, whistled and stamped their feet. Finally, the noise would die down, and little Daddy would stumble through the next stanza. Then the noise would begin again. His poem had a great number of stanzas. Little Daddy kept on reciting them doggedly right through to the end. By the time he finally came to the last line, everyone was dying of laughter, both the audience and those who were standing in the wings — all the kids he'd never seen before, and all of his own schoolmates. Misha was rolling around on the floor. Little Daddy's teacher was laughing, too. He could never forget the disgrace of it all.

Many years have passed since then. Little Daddy grew up. But to this very day if a middle-aged stranger suddenly rushes up to him and shouts: "If you were braver than Robin Hood!" and then meows before he disappears, Daddy knows he used to go to School No. 9 when he was a boy and still remembers little Daddy's poem. And Daddy too has never forgotten that he isn't Pushkin.

## HOW DADDY PLAYED PING-PONG



When Daddy was a little schoolboy, a new game was invented. It was called ping-pong. Nowadays lots of children play ping-pong. But in those days ping-pong was all the rage. It was played from morn-

ing till night in every school and courtyard, on tables, benches, grand pianos, and on the floor. Some even played at night. Many kids forgot that anything else existed except ping-pong. There were ping-pong matches in little Daddy's school every single day. Every class played each other to determine the school champion. Then they played each other, and the winner became the district champion. Then there was a city tournament. Then Moscow and Leningrad played each other.

Little Daddy was amazed. He just couldn't understand why it was so interesting to keep bouncing a little white ball back and forth with little paddles.

"Why don't you try it?" one of his friends would say.

"It's no fun."

"It sure is."

"No, it isn't!"

"Just try it once."

"I don't want to."

This conversation was repeated several times. Naturally, one bright day little Daddy got a ping-pong paddle and took his place at one side of the table.

And that was the end of him.

I said "one bright day", but little Daddy's parents



considered it to be one of the darkest days of their lives. And all because little Daddy became fascinated by ping-pong. In the beginning, he couldn't manage to hit the ball. When he finally learned to hit the ball, it wouldn't bounce on the table. At last, when little Daddy managed to hit the ball and it bounced across the table, he took a real interest in the game. He discovered that there were different ways of hitting the ball: you could chop it, or send it into a spin, off to one of the corners. A good player could make the ball bounce on the part of his opponent's side of the table that was the hardest to reach. (Daddy still thinks ping-pong is a wonderful game.) But then little Daddy thought it was the most fascinating game in the world. He gave up reading. He stopped doing his homework. The only reason he went to school at all was to play his favorite game. He began playing better and better, but his marks kept getting worse and worse.

The teacher took him aside and talked to him several times. She explained that there was a limit to everything. She even reminded him of the saying: "There's a time for everything."

Little Daddy didn't argue, because it was no use. How could he make her understand that ping-pong was the *work* of his life, while everything else was *play*? He became so good at the game that he could

beat many of his friends. The day he beat the school's third-best player, his teacher said,

"I want to speak to your parents. Things cannot continue as they are now."

She wrote a letter to Grandpa and Grandma which they never received, because little Daddy pulled it out of the mailbox, read it, and tore it up. It was so awful that he tore it up into tiny bits.

His teacher sent his parents another letter. It was still worse than the first one. So little Daddy tore it into still tinier bits.

I'm ashamed to say so, but that's exactly what happened.

Little Daddy's teacher was very surprised, for Grandpa and Grandma never came to see her. Just as she was about to write them a third letter, little Daddy beat the school champion at ping-pong. After that, he decided there was no use going to school any more, and so he didn't. Every morning he'd make-believe he was going to school. But there were no notebooks or textbooks in his schoolbag. Instead, there were two ping-pong paddles, a net and three balls. And a sandwich, which was little Daddy's lunch. All day long he played ping-pong. Little Daddy had many new friends, all of whom were also crazy about ping-pong. He knew every Moscow champion by sight. The famous Falkevich brothers greeted him

as an equal. He became a member of the junior team. He'd already lost his first real game. He —

At this point his teacher, having received no answer to her letters and missing little Daddy in class, went to see him. Little Daddy was not at home. Grandma and Grandpa were, though. When they discovered their son had been playing hooky and was spending his days slamming a little white ball around, they were thunderstruck. They decided that little Daddy was out of his mind. After all, they'd never played ping-pong. They hid his paddles and balls, and took little Daddy to a doctor.

This was no plain, ordinary doctor. This was a professor who'd spent his life treating crazy people. However, he'd never played ping-pong. He simply couldn't understand why little Daddy had to play hooky on account of this game called ping-pong. Little Daddy couldn't understand why the professor was asking him such stupid questions.

"Do the boys hit you in school?"

"Do you sleep well?"

"Do you have headaches in the morning?"

"Do you have headaches in the evening?"

"Are you afraid of the dark?"

"Have you ever had fits?"

"Have you ever been unconscious?"

Naturally, little Daddy said "no" to every one of them.

Then the professor continued, "Do you like your school?"

"Do you like your teacher?"

"Do you have friends in school?"

"Boys?"

"Girls?"

And now little Daddy said "yes" to every question.

"Is there a girl you like better than the rest?" the professor asked.

That made little Daddy mad.

"Why d'you keep asking me all these questions? I was playing hooky so's I could play ping-pong. And your questions have nothing to do with anything."

"All right," the professor said. "What do you intend to do now?"

"Play ping-pong," little Daddy replied.

"Do you know how this might all end? Have you ever thought of the future?"

"Sure," little Daddy said. "Our team might win the Moscow tournament."

"I'm serious!" this professor snapped.

"So am I," said little Daddy.

Then the professor shrugged. He put some drops into a glass of water and said, "Here, drink this," to little Daddy.

"I don't want to," said little Daddy. "I'm not sick."

"But I am," said the professor and drank the medicine himself. Then he added in a whisper, "If I talk your parents into letting you play through the season, do you promise you'll go back to school in September?"

"Yes," said little Daddy.

Then the professor summoned Grandpa and Grandma. He said, "The boy is absolutely sane. Let him play ping-pong. He's missed most of the term, anyway." And he took some more medicine.

And so little Daddy and his parents went home.

Little Daddy's team didn't win the tournament, but it did take second place. And Daddy still insists that the year was not wasted. He realized that ping-pong wasn't the most important thing in the world. He even began to miss his school. He went back the following September and eventually graduated.

Many years passed. His old paddle is still on top of the cupboard. Grandpa and Grandma still shudder at the sight of it. But Daddy looks at it fondly. It was certainly silly to drop out of school because of ping-pong. Everybody smiles when they hear this story. So does Daddy. And yet, ping-pong is a very good game. I'll write all about it some day.

When Daddy saw that his daughter had taken an

interest in ping-pong, he became very worried. However, he was relieved to see that she wasn't going to drop out of school on account of it, though she did become the school champion.

That's when Daddy finally understood how Grandpa and Grandma had felt, and he hid his old paddle in a far corner of the cupboard. But he takes it out sometimes and recalls his ping-pong days.

## HOW DADDY MADE A FOOTSTOOL



When Daddy was a little schoolboy, he made a footstool all by himself. It was a footstool he never forgot. There was probably not another one like it in the whole wide world. Ivan Petrovich, the shop teacher, was positive there wasn't.

In the school workshop Ivan Petrovich taught

the boys to hammer and saw, to plane and glue. He taught them to take apart what they'd done badly and start all over again. And again, and again, until they got it right.

Ivan Petrovich was a little old man and wore steel-rimmed glasses. His favorite saying was: "Well begun, half done." Sometimes he'd add, "A loafer is afraid of work."

This is how he began their first lesson.

"What's this?" he said.

"A hammer!" they all shouted.

"Right. And this?"

"A nail!"

"Right again! And what's this?"

"A board!"

"Good. Now the idea is to drive this nail into this board with a single blow of this hammer. Any volunteers?"

"Me!"

"I can do it!"

"Let me!"

There were many volunteers, but even the strongest boys couldn't drive the nail in at a blow. Then Ivan Petrovich took another nail, placed it on the board and struck it. He didn't even strike it very hard, but the nail went right into the board, right up to the very head. They all gasped.

"You need a good eye and a steady hand," Ivan Petrovich said. "Is that clear? Do you think I always used to hit the nail? Not at all. Sometimes I'd hit my finger, and then I'd get cuffed, besides. That was in the old days, and that was my master's way of telling me he'd hit the nail and I hadn't. That's how we were taught."

Everyone felt sorry for Ivan Petrovich when he'd been a boy, but then he laughed and said,

"Don't worry. I won't cuff anyone. You're in charge here, too. All these tools are for you. We'll begin by learning how to make a footstool."

A footstool! What could be simpler? But you just try and make one. And make it fit the measurements. Oh how much sawing and planing, and gluing there is to be done! And how many times you have to take apart what you've done, and start all over again! Oh how much work, how much energy, how much skill and patience are needed!

Misha was the first to complete his footstool. "Have a seat," he said grandly.

"Have a seat yourself," Ivan Petrovich replied.

Misha looked very proud as he sat down. Carefully. The footstool creaked and fell apart. Misha landed on the floor, and everyone laughed.

"That was a quick job, but a bad one," Ivan Petrovich said. "Now start all over again, and don't

be in such a rush, or you'll have everyone laughing again."

No one could make a good footstool the first time. Everyone had to do it over again.

"Don't worry," Ivan Petrovich said. "Moscow wasn't built in a day. You probably thought hammering and sawing was easy. It is, but you have to put a lot of sweat into it to do a good job."

The boys did their best. Shop was just like a regular lesson: each one wanted to be the first to solve the problem. It was really fun. But you can't sit on a problem. After you've solved it, that's it. Here, however, you could sit on your own footstool after you'd made it. And anybody else could sit on it, too.

A girl named Varya made the first really good footstool. True, her father was a carpenter, and he'd taught her how to use a plane and a saw.

"It's an excellent job! You've put all the boys to shame," Ivan Petrovich said.

The boys felt awful.

When Misha finished his footstool, the rest of the boys began to feel better.

After that everyone began handing in his finished work.

"It does resemble a footstool, more or less," Ivan Petrovich would say.

Finally, little Daddy completed his footstool. His hands were scratched and bruised, and there was glue on his face and clothes, but no matter. He'd finally completed the first footstool he'd ever made in his life. Why, he'd never even felt as happy as this on his birthday!

Ivan Petrovich must've guessed it. "Go on, sit on it."

Those were the magic words.

Little Daddy sat down gingerly. The footstool didn't even squeak. All of a sudden, Ivan Petrovich took a very close look at it.

"Count your legs," he said.

Little Daddy was very surprised. He looked down at his feet. There were two, as always. But then the kids began to giggle. Ivan Petrovich laughed, too.

To this day Daddy can't understand how he managed to make a five-legged footstool. But there it was. We still have it. And it still has five legs. Five, not four. And he can still hear Ivan Petrovich saying: "Five legs are no better than three. Start all over again." And he thinks this is something you should remember, no matter what job you're working on.



**HOW DADDY WASN'T THE BEST PUPIL  
IN HIS CLASS**



When Daddy was a little schoolboy, he was never at the head of his class. And this is why: he missed the very first days of the first grade, because he was sick. That meant he had to catch up with the

rest of his class. When he finally did, he got sick again. This time he had the measles, and he missed days and days of school. He had to study all summer long at home, so as not to be left back. When he started in the second grade, he got whooping cough. And the mumps. And something else, besides. As if that wasn't enough, the family moved to Moscow, where he started in the third grade.

For some strange reason, little Daddy didn't come down with anything all through the third grade. Instead, he started writing poetry. Naturally, his poems weren't very good, but nobody else in little Daddy's school wrote any kind of poems, not even bad ones. Besides, his teacher praised his reading, even though he ran all his words together when he read aloud. She praised his compositions, too, though his penmanship was terrible. The margins of his arithmetic notebook were covered with his teacher's exclamations, such as: "Sloppy writing!" "Try to write clearly!" "What a mess!" Somehow, though, he got all the problems right. So although his teacher often praised him, she scolded him more often still.

There was a parents' meeting at the end of the spring term. Little Daddy's teacher came over to his parents after the meeting and said,

"Would you please stay on? I'd like to speak to you."

After all the other parents had left, she said, "Your boy is my best pupil, but he has many shortcomings. His penmanship is very poor. His homework is sloppy. And I'll probably never see as messy a notebook as his in all my living days. Please don't tell him I said he's my best pupil, or he'll become over-confident and won't try to improve. I hope you realize I'm saying this for his benefit."

Little Daddy's parents agreed. When they got home, all they said was that he should try to improve his penmanship and not mess up his notebooks. But little Daddy had been hearing the same thing from his teacher every single day. He knew the words by heart.

"What else did she say about me?" he wanted to know.

"She said you've been promoted to the fourth grade," Grandma said. "We're very happy and hope you'll try harder next year."

Little Daddy never dreamed his teacher thought he was her best pupil. After all, the best pupil's notebooks and schoolbooks always had to be clean and neat. The best pupil had to have an A in penmanship. The best pupil had to know the answer to any question the teacher might ask before anyone else in his class did. The best pupil never had more than one ink blot in his notebook during the entire year,



and then only because someone had probably jiggled his hand when he was writing. The best pupil was really the best. If he didn't know the answer to a question, nobody knew it. Naturally, little Daddy could never be the best pupil in his class.

Summer passed, and it was autumn again. Little Daddy started in the fourth grade. There were some new children in his class. One of them was named Alec. He was a sturdy boy and full of fun. He had very thick brown hair. So much of it, in fact, that it kept getting into his eyes, and he had to keep tossing his head to keep it out of his eyes. He raced around with the rest of the boys during recess. He got into mischief and even into fights. But during classes he really was the very best pupil. He was best in arithmetic. His hand always shot up first whenever the teacher asked the class a question. He was a very good reader. His penmanship was excellent, and his notebooks were so neat it gave you goose pimples just to look at them. Alec was a good friend. It was easy to see he was the best pupil in his class, and the teacher said so at the next parents' meeting. Little Daddy's parents became rather upset. They looked unhappy when they got home.

"How come you were the best pupil last year, and you're not this year?" Grandpa said to little Daddy the moment they opened the door.

That's when little Daddy found out he'd been the best pupil in his class. At first, he couldn't believe it. Then he got very angry, because he was awfully hurt.

"Why didn't you tell me that last year?"

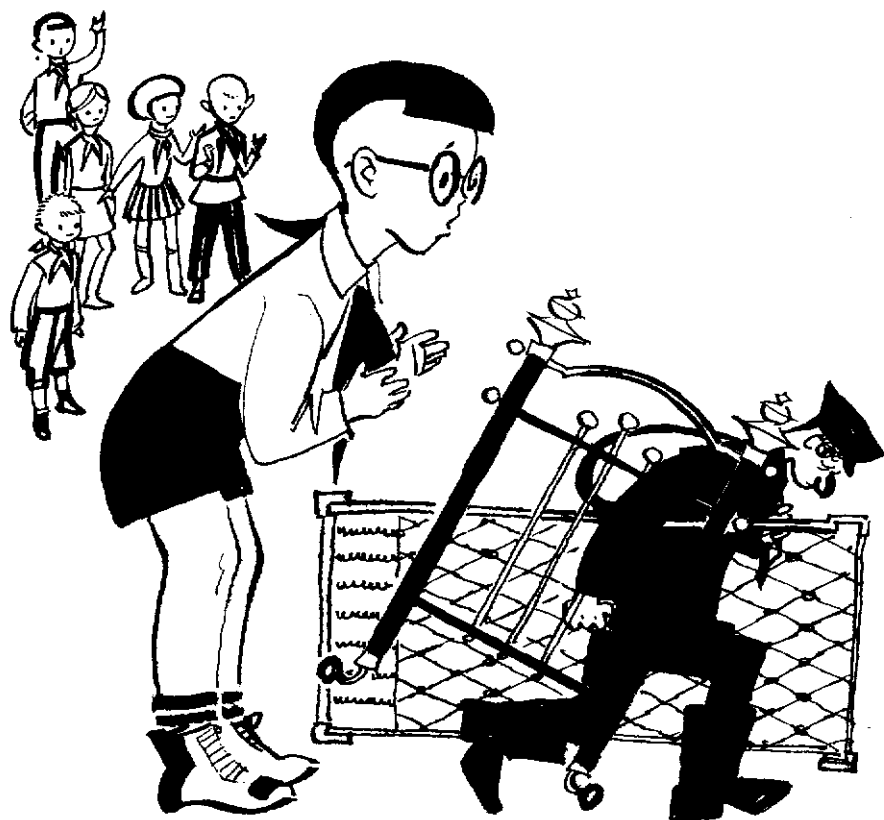
"So's you wouldn't get stuck-up," Grandpa replied. "So's you wouldn't get big-headed. Your teacher said not to tell you."

"If I'd have known I was the best pupil," little Daddy said, "I'd have tried very hard. I know Alec's the best pupil in my class, but I'd have tried to be second. Or third. Or I'd have just tried harder to be a good pupil. But you fooled me. Now I won't ever, ever be the best pupil in my class! Or the second-best. Or even the third-best. And I'm not fooling you."

Little Daddy was telling the truth. He graduated from school, and then from college, but he was never at the head of his class. Nor was he second. Or even third. But nobody fooled him again. He was always told to his face that he might have done much better work if only he'd tried harder.

His teacher was probably right, but Daddy still feels bad about the whole business.

## HOW DADDY COLLECTED WASTE PAPER AND SCRAP IRON



When Daddy was a little schoolboy, he and his classmates collected waste paper and scrap iron for the school drive. They all knew that scrap paper and old rags would be made into new notebooks and inter-

esting books. It was nice knowing that you'd done your share to put out a new book — even if it was only half of a book. And even if it wasn't a very interesting book. And even if the paper for the new notebooks was graph paper, and that meant they'd be arithmetic notebooks, a subject little Daddy hated.

Then there was the scrap iron drive.

It was hard to believe that a dented old pot or a leaky tea kettle could be made into a part of a new locomotive, a real tractor or — imagine! — a real airplane that would actually fly.

Why, it was worth bringing in a *new* tea kettle for such a grand project. At any rate, little Daddy and his friends would gladly have done so if what they collected were made into an airplane. Every day after school they'd comb the neighborhood, looking for scrap iron. They rang doorbells and didn't miss a single house or a single apartment. They were having lots of fun, tramping along together, seeing so many different people, and sometimes being given some very strange objects for the scrap iron drive. They were given old brass candlesticks, broken mechanical toys, metal doorknobs, rusty wire, a birdcage, old irons and metal trays.

This is what happened on one of those days.

Little Uncle Vic, little Daddy's kid brother, always tagged along, and because he was so much younger than the other boys, he always brought up the rear. When little Daddy and his friends were already on

their way downstairs in one of the houses, a middle-aged woman opened her door.

"Little boy!" she said to little Uncle Vic, who was far behind the rest. "Are you collecting scrap iron?"

"Scrap iron, 'n copper, 'n steel, 'n bronze, too. All kinds of old stuff," he said.

"I see," said the lady. "Call the boys back up, and I'll give you something really big. It happens to be new, but that doesn't matter."

Little Uncle Vic, little Daddy and all the other boys followed her into her apartment. They were awfully surprised when the lady pointed to a big new iron bedstead and said,

"There. It's all pure metal. Take it away!"

The boys exchanged glances, and little Daddy said,

"We just collect scrap iron. This is a whole huge bed."

"Never mind," said the lady. "You can unscrew it into pieces when you get it outside."

The boys exchanged glances again and rolled the bed out onto the landing. Even though there were eight of them, they had an awfully hard time getting the bed down the stairs.

"Hey, I bet we'll take first place in the district," Volodya said. "You know how much this weighs?"

When they finally lugged it out into the courtyard, they stopped to catch their breaths.

"I bet we take first place in the city, bringing in a bed like this," Shura said. "But how'll we lug it all the way over to the school yard?"

The lady had followed them down the stairs. When they finally edged the bed out the front door, she smiled a big smile and said to little Uncle Vic, who was the last one out, as usual,

"Thank you ever so much." After a moment she added, "This is my son-in-law's bed. I hope he drops dead!"

Little Uncle Vic couldn't understand what she meant, but he didn't say anything to the other boys. At last, huffing and puffing, they lugged it to the scrap iron heap in a corner of the school yard.

The very next day a man carrying a gunny sack showed up outside the school and said, "Give me back my bed! My mother-in-law donated it to your school drive, but what am I supposed to sleep on now? The floor? Besides, it's a new bed."

Everybody laughed. Everybody, that is, except the eight boys who'd dragged the bed all the way to the school yard.

"How about it, kids?" Shura said. "I guess we'll have to let him have it. After all, this is a scrap iron drive. We're not supposed to be collecting new beds."

"Then why'd we drag it all the way over here?" Volodya muttered.

"I'm sorry, kids," the man with the gunny sack

said. "But I brought you something in exchange, so you won't feel so bad." He pulled a new tea kettle, a new metal tray, and a brand-new iron from his sack.

Little Daddy eyed them and said, "Are these yours? Or your mother-in-law's?"

That made everybody laugh.

"We don't collect new things," Shura said to the man.

So he put them all back into his sack and started rolling the bed back.

After a while Volodya muttered, "We should've donated him to the scrap iron drive."

"Him and his mother-in-law," Shura added.

"I hope she drops dead!" little Uncle Vic said, and though he said it in a very low voice, it made everyone laugh.

Little Daddy, little Uncle Vic and all the other boys couldn't forget that bed. For a long while after, whenever they had to lift anything heavy, they'd say,

"My son-in-law's bed. I hope he drops dead!"

Their class didn't take first place in the district, but they did make third place. Minus the bed.

## HOW DADDY HAD SCARLET FEVER



When Daddy was a little schoolboy, he got sick one day.

This is what happened. Little Daddy woke up early one morning. It was time for him to wash up, get dressed and have his breakfast, after which he'd go to

school. But little Daddy didn't want to wash up, get dressed, or go to school. He didn't even want to have his breakfast. He was feeling awful. His throat was sore, and he had a headache. First, he'd feel hot all over. Then he'd have chills. Little Daddy was sick.

"Time to get up!" Grandma called.

"You'll be late for school again!" Grandpa said.

"I have a sore throat," said little Daddy.

"A sore throat?"

"And a headache. I'm hot. And I'm cold."

"I see," said Grandpa. "What subjects do you have today?"

"Literature," said little Daddy.

"And what else?"

"And arithmetic, and German, and drawing."

"It's clear as day," said Grandpa. "The very thought of arithmetic gives you a headache. German gives you a sore throat, and drawing makes you flushed and chilled. No more monkey business! Get up this minute!"

Little Daddy felt very hurt. True enough, he'd longed to get sick on the days he had arithmetic or German. Sometimes he even said he had a headache. On the days he had drawing, little Daddy often felt hot and cold. It was all very true.

But he didn't have to pretend now. This time he knew he was really and truly sick. However, his parents shooed him off to school. They didn't even want to take his temperature before he left.

"Mummy'll take your temperature when you get home this afternoon," Grandpa said.

"Your temperature is the most normal there ever was or ever will be," Grandma added.

Their words hurt little Daddy's feelings even more. He didn't even feel like answering them. He got out of bed, washed up, got dressed and had some tea. Then he put his books and notebooks in his briefcase and set off for school, though he knew he was really and truly sick.

He began to feel even worse when he got to school. His literature teacher called on him to recite a poem, and when he began to recite, his voice sounded so wheezy, she said,

"Whatever is the matter with you?"

"I have a sore throat," said little Daddy.

His teacher looked at him very closely and said, "You look sick. You'd better go straight home."

So little Daddy put his books back into his briefcase and trudged back home.

There, at last, Grandma took his temperature. His fever was so high that she phoned for the doctor immediately. He knew little Daddy well, for he'd always been his doctor. In fact, he'd been his parents' doctor when they were children. The doctor was a cheerful little old man who looked like Grandfather Frost. He peered down little Daddy's throat and chuckled.

"I haven't had such a perfect case of scarlet fever in a long time," he said. He sounded pleased.

When little Daddy heard the doctor say "scarlet fever" he knew the end was near. "Am I going to die?" he asked the doctor.

At this, the old doctor laughed out loud. "Why, yes, of course, you'll die," he said. "In about a hundred years from now."

He laughed so hard that he choked, and then he began to cough and cough. The doctor wasn't a silly man at all. He just felt that a doctor should do more than simply cure his patients' illnesses. He felt a doctor should do his best to cheer them up as well. That's why he was forever chuckling or laughing.

He was still chuckling when he phoned for an ambulance to take little Daddy to the hospital. As the orderlies in their white smocks carried little Daddy downstairs on a stretcher, he decided he really must be dying.

Soon after, he was in a bed in a ward. This was the first time in his life he'd be spending the night away from home. Besides, he was sick, and in a hospital, and a little boy was crying in the dark across the ward.

Even though little Daddy was feeling very sorry for himself, he finally fell asleep. When he awoke, it was broad daylight. The little boy who'd been crying in the night was speaking to another boy, and then they both laughed. Two other boys were playing

checkers. A really grown-up boy was in the bed next to little Daddy's. He was reading.

When he saw little Daddy open his eyes, he put down his book and said, "What're you supposed to say?"

"Thank you," little Daddy said quickly.

"Oh no. You're supposed to say: 'Good morning.'"

"Good morning," said little Daddy.

"And good morning to you. D'you play checkers?"

"I'm not too good at checkers."

"I bet," the big boy said and winked. "Chin up, old man. Being in a hospital isn't that bad. No school, no homework. Hey?"

"Yes," little Daddy said and suddenly started feeling much better.

Breakfast was brought in, and little Daddy got to know the names of the other boys. Then he fell asleep again. He wasn't feeling anxious any more, because he saw that nobody had any thoughts of dying of scarlet fever here.

Little Daddy woke up when the doctor came in. He examined the youngest boy in the ward first and said, "You'll be going home to your mommy soon." Then he examined the big boy in the bed next to little Daddy's, and when he said, "You'll be going home to your girlfriend soon!" all the other boys laughed, and so did the big boy. He must have felt funny being in a ward with a bunch of little kids.

"How's your throat?" the doctor asked little Daddy.

"It's sore," little Daddy replied.

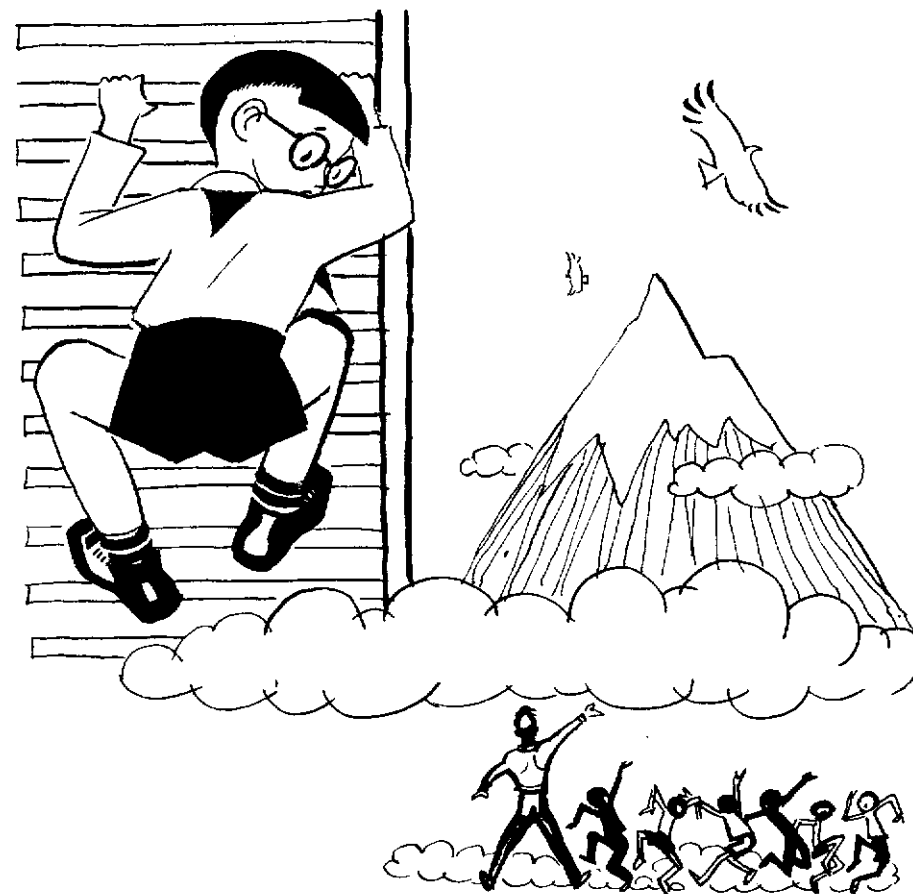
"You'll soon be feeling better," the doctor said. Though he had no beard and didn't chuckle like their old family doctor did, little Daddy knew he was telling him the truth.

That's when he fell asleep again. His throat didn't feel as sore when he was sleeping. Soon it didn't feel too sore when he was awake, either. He became friends with the other boys in the ward, and they played dominoes, chess and checkers every day. There were a lot of good books on a shelf there, too. The big boy was a great story-teller, and though none of the other boys had a girlfriend and he did, he was really just one of the boys.

When little Daddy got well, he was even sorry to be leaving, because he'd found new friends in the hospital, where things really weren't that bad at all. He hadn't any homework to do, and had had a lot of fun. It's nice being sick if you have fun while you're at it.

Now little Daddy knew what a hospital was like from the inside, and though it's not the best of places to be in, he was never afraid of hospitals after that.

## HOW DADDY CLIMBED A WALL



When Daddy was a little schoolboy, he climbed a wall one day. And so did all his classmates.

There was really nothing surprising about this. They were all supposed to climb a wall. Those who couldn't manage it by themselves got a little help

from the teacher. You've probably guessed by now that this was a gym class, and that they were all supposed to climb the wall bars. Each pupil had to climb up to the very top bar and then come down again.

There are many ways to climb a wall, and each one has his own way of doing it. Some scramble up and then scramble down again. Others crawl up and then take even more time to crawl down. There are those that climb up slowly, but come down quickly. And then there are those who can't climb up at all.

Every boy and girl in little Daddy's class climbed the wall bars right up to the ceiling. But not everyone managed to come down again.

Little Daddy had always been afraid of high places. Everything was fine as long as he was climbing up the bars and not looking down. But when he finally reached the top bar and did look down, he got dizzy. His grip loosened, and he nearly tumbled. That's when he shut his eyes and gripped the top bars as tightly as he could, using his hands and his knees. Soon all of the other kids were back down again. They lined up below. Little Daddy was still hanging on for dear life up at the top. The gym teacher was surprised to see him still up there.

"Quit clowning!" he shouted. "Come on down."

"I can't," little Daddy sort of croaked.

That made everyone laugh. They all thought he really was clowning. But he wasn't. That was the last

thing in the world he could have done just then. The gym teacher was getting angry.

"If you don't come down this minute, you'll be very sorry!"

"I'm already very sorry," little Daddy said in the same croaky voice.

Everybody laughed again.

"I hope you realize you're getting a D for gym today!"

"I don't want to get a D," little Daddy said.

"Then come right down this minute!"

"I can't."

"Then you're getting a D, and you're to leave the premises! D'you hear me?"

"Yes."

"Leave the gym this minute!"

"I can't."

"D'you want to be expelled?"

"No."

Little Daddy thought this was so much like a game very small children played in which you had to reply "no" or "I can't" to whatever question you were asked, and try not to laugh, for if you did, you were out. And so, even though little Daddy was very scared, what with being stranded so high up under the ceiling, he smiled.

"Oh, I see you find this very funny," the teacher said. "Are you smiling?"

"Yes," said little Daddy in a near-whisper. He



wanted to add that even though he was smiling, he was scared stiff. So scared, in fact, that he was afraid to open his eyes, to say nothing of trying to climb down, and that the only reason he was smiling was because he'd thought he and the gym teacher had sounded like they were playing that baby game, which was really a very funny situation.

And wasn't it?

Ah, if only little Daddy had known then how much trouble he would get into on account of this habit he had of smiling or laughing when something was funny.

Like now, for instance.

The minute he said he really was smiling, the kids down below began to laugh. The gym teacher tried to restore order. He was shouting things like: "Quiet, everybody!" and "We'll have no more of this!"

He was a very young gym teacher and seemed to be always shouting at them. Well, here he was now, shouting again, and everyone was laughing. What with all this noise, nobody heard the bell ring for recess.

When the principal, who was passing by just then, opened the door and looked in, this is what he saw: little Daddy clutching the top bar for dear life with his eyes shut tight; the rest of his class laughing and shrieking; and the gym teacher, who was all red in the face, shouting,

"I'll summon your parents to school! I'll have you all expelled! Every last one of you!"

"What's going on here?" the principal said, coming up to the gym teacher.

All of a sudden everything became very quiet. The gym teacher stopped shouting. The kids stopped laughing. And little Daddy, hearing the principal's soft-spoken words, opened his eyes and slowly climbed down the wall bars, as in a trance.

"I'd like to speak to you privately," the principal said to the gym teacher, and they left the gym.

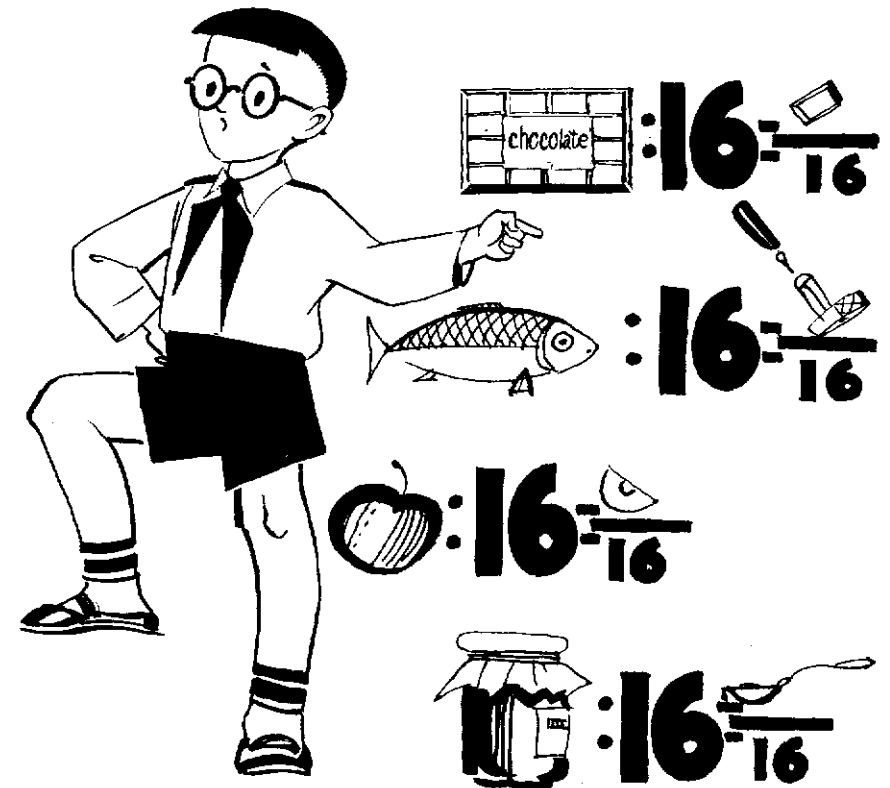
No one summoned little Daddy to the principal's office. No one summoned his parents to school. And no one was expelled. When the principal saw little Daddy in the hall during the next recess, he shook his finger at him and frowned, but then he suddenly smiled and walked away quickly.

The gym teacher stopped paying attention to little Daddy from then on, but the kids all noticed that he had stopped shouting at them, too. Little Daddy wasn't scared of climbing the wall bars after that. Still, whenever they were called on to climb the wall bars, his classmates seemed to be waiting for him to get stuck up there again, scared stiff and with his eyes shut tight. The gym teacher seemed to be expecting that to happen, too, because he always looked away when it was little Daddy's turn to climb the bars.

Many years have passed since then, but his old classmates are still certain he was playing a joke on them that day, and that he wasn't the least bit scared.

Daddy is hardly afraid of high places any more, and he even took a plane on several of his trips. But still, he prefers to go by train. And he still hates to have anybody shout at him. His friends say that if anyone does, he looks like he might climb a wall.

## HOW DADDY DIVIDED UP THE PASTRIES



When Daddy was a little schoolboy, he spent a summer in a Young Pioneer camp. His kid brother, little Uncle Vic, went along, too.

Little Daddy liked the boys in his group. There was so much for them to do in camp. One day they helped

the collective farmers on a nearby farm. The next day they went on an overnight hike and camped in the woods, telling each other ghost stories as they sat around the campfire. One day they invited the kids of a nearby camp over for the track and field competitions, a swimming contest and ping-pong and volleyball games. They put out a wall newspaper. They had a talent show, and everything they did, they did together.

But rest hour was never what it should have been. Nobody wanted to sleep after lunch, because that meant they'd be missing out on something they might have been doing instead, something that was much more interesting than wasting their time sleeping.

It was fun to wake up very early and watch Boris, the camp bugler, get up, look at his watch, wave to whoever else was up and run outside to play reveille. He blew his bugle so loudly it made everybody tumble out of bed. Everybody, that is, except Volodya. He'd pull the covers up over his head and burrow under his pillow. He should've been named Sleepyhead. But little Daddy would yank the blanket off him, someone else would pull off his top sheet and lift the pillow off his head, while the rest of the gang stood by, ready to start tickling him. Then Boris would shout right into his ear, after which Volodya would at last wake up.

It was a pleasant surprise for little Daddy to discover that somebody else got up later than he did, because he was always the last one up at home. For some strange reason, here in camp he always got up feeling great when all the other boys got up. He went to bed when all the other boys did. And he never read under the covers till all hours. That was probably why he never had any trouble getting up in the morning.

Sometimes the kids' parents would come out to the camp to see how their children were getting along. Even though the food was good, the parents would always bring along a treat of some kind or other. Naturally, none of the kids objected to this. There were fourteen boys, not counting little Daddy and little Uncle Vic, in their bunkhouse. That's why, when Shura's parents brought him a jar of jam, he and each of his fifteen friends got two spoonfulls apiece. When Volodya's parents brought him a large smoked fish, he sliced it into sixteen small pieces.

A chocolate bar, an apple pie and a jelly roll were all divided into sixteen parts.

Then little Daddy and little Uncle Vic's parents came out to see them. They brought each of their boys a pastry, because they knew they loved pastries. That's why they were so surprised when little Uncle Vic said,

"How can we divide two pastries into sixteen parts?"

And little Daddy replied, "That's easy. First, we cut each pastry in half, then in half again, and then in half again. And that'll make sixteen pieces."

"But why in the world would you want to do that?" Grandma said.

"We all share everything," little Daddy explained.

"I shared everything: smoked fish, and jam, and pie," little Uncle Vic chimed in.

"All right," Grandma said. "Next time we'll bring you sixteen pastries. Well, perhaps not sixteen, but eight for sure, so that each boy will have at least half a pastry. Meanwhile, though, you eat these two."

"We always share everything," little Daddy said.

"I'd rather throw mine away," little Uncle Vic added.

"If that's how you feel about it," Grandpa said, "we'll eat them. There are two pastries, and two of us, which means one for your mother, and one for me."

Their parents were only teasing them. They'd never really have eaten their boys' pastries, but little Daddy and little Uncle Vic didn't know they were just teasing.

"Okay, go on and eat your old pastries," little Daddy said.

"Go on and eat them. I'm not looking," little Uncle Vic said and turned away.

"We were only fooling," Grandpa said. "Here are your pastries. You can chop them up into a hundred pieces if you feel like it."

"Sixteen, not a hundred," little Daddy muttered.

"We'll cut each one into eight pieces," little Uncle Vic said.

After supper the two pastries were cut into sixteen pieces. The pieces were really very tiny, but there were sixteen of them, one for each of the boys. Everyone was very pleased.

Nothing very special had happened, but for some reason or other little Daddy remembered that day. And so did little Uncle Vic.

Because it was all just and fair.

## HOW DADDY WAS TEASED



When Daddy was a little schoolboy, some of the kids in his class used to tease him. The other boys and girls were teased, too, but somehow they didn't get mad when they were. Little Daddy did, though. That's why it was such fun to tease him. He was called Professor, because he wore glasses. He was called

He's-a-poet-and-don't-know-it, because he wrote poetry. He was called Honey, because he was a shy boy who didn't fight, curse, or tease the girls. Actually, the girls nicknamed him Honey. They didn't mean to hurt his feelings. They always said it very nicely. But when the boys heard them calling him Honey, they teased the life out of little Daddy. They meowed the word, they barked the word, and said it in sing-song voices. They wrote "Honey" on the blackboard. One day, when their new teacher asked little Daddy his name, his classmates shouted: "Honey!" and everybody began to laugh. Even the girls.

That made the teacher smile, too, even though he didn't know what the joke was all about.

Little Daddy had never felt so miserable in his life.

A lot of the kids in his class had nicknames. Kolya was called Beanpole, because he was so tall and skinny. Tolya was called Humpty-Dumpty, or Dumpy for short, because he was so fat. Some of the nicknames were take-offs on the kids' last names.

Igor liked to boast. Besides, he had a bad habit of spitting through his teeth. His nickname was Spit-boast.

The girls had nicknames, too. One was Cry-baby, another was Bunny, a third was Cookie, and so on. The tallest girl was nicknamed Tiny, and the shortest was nicknamed Teeny. Grisha, who had red hair, was called Red, or House-on-fire.

Little Daddy was the only one who got sore every

time somebody called him Professor, or He's-a-poet-and-don't-know-it, or Honey. He especially hated to be called Honey. Whenever anyone called him that, he'd stamp off in a huff and stop talking to the girl or boy.

Now this is what happened soon after. Little Daddy's home teacher, Maria Petrovna, always addressed her pupils by their last names when she called on them, though of course she knew their first names, too. If she was pleased with the work a pupil had done, she'd always address him or her by their first names. For instance, she'd say: "Very good, Liza" or "Kolya's composition is excellent". All the children wanted Maria Petrovna to call them by their first names. Though she was a strict teacher, she was fair. There was one thing she couldn't stand, though, and that was that so many of her pupils had those silly nicknames.

One day she said to them, "I know you all have nicknames, but I think it's very silly to tease a person just because he happens to wear glasses, or just because he's short. Why don't you show some respect for yourselves and each other?"

They all promised they wouldn't tease each other any more, and truly kept their promises for a while. But then they slipped back into their old habit of calling each other by their nicknames.

Maria Petrovna decided she'd settle things her own way. This is what she did. At the very next parents' meeting she said, "Now let's discuss your children's progress. Dumpy is very good at arithmetic, but his

spelling is terrible. Cookie does her class assignments well, but her homework is usually very sloppy. Red is our class artist, but he needs to catch up on his reading. Cry-baby and Bunny need additional help in arithmetic. Perhaps Beanpole might help them after classes."

The parents listened to her in amazement. Then one of them said,

"I don't understand what you're talking about. Beanpole? Dumpy? Whom do you mean?"

"Your children will explain it all to you," Maria Petrovna replied. "As long as they keep calling each other by these nicknames, I'll refer to them by them, too. And will Spitboast's parents please stay on? I want to speak to them privately."

The parents were all very aggravated when they got home, and each child was shamed and scolded. Maria Petrovna's plan had worked, because that put an end to the silly nicknames once and for all.

Or at least it nearly did.

Because little Daddy was still called Honey. It sort of just came naturally. There was nothing Maria Petrovna could do about it.

After a while, little Daddy finally got used to being called Honey. Now, when he's all grown up, his old classmates still call him that, and he doesn't mind. Especially when the ladies call him that. Because they were the girls who gave him his nickname in the first place.

## HOW DADDY DECIDED TO TELL THE TRUTH



When Daddy was a little schoolboy, he was no good at lying at all. Other children somehow managed to lie without being found out, but every time little Daddy lied, he was told: "You're not telling the truth."

Little Daddy was always surprised. He'd say: "How'd you guess?"

And someone would say: "Why, it's written all over your face."

After having heard this several times, little Daddy decided to see what was wrong with his face. He went over to the mirror and said: "I'm the strongest boy in the world! I'm the smartest boy in the world! I'm a dog! I'm a crocodile! I'm a locomotive!" Then he stopped speaking and stared at his reflection in the mirror. There wasn't a single word written anywhere on his face.

He decided that was because these were little lies and didn't count. So, still staring at himself in the mirror, he said in a very loud voice: "I can swim! I can draw anything I want to! My penmanship is excellent!"

But even such out-and-out lies didn't seem to count. He stared hard at himself in the mirror again. No writing appeared on his face. Finally, he went off to talk things over with his parents.

"I lied and lied, and stared at myself in the mirror, but there's nothing written on my face. Why'd you say that whenever I lie, it's written all over my face?"

Little Daddy's parents had a good laugh, and then Grandpa said,

"Nobody can see what's written on his face. You'll never see that in a mirror. It's just like trying to bite your elbow. Ever try doing that?"

"No," said little Daddy, "but I'll try right now." And he tried, but no matter how he twisted and

turned, he couldn't get his mouth near his elbow. He decided not to stare at his face in the mirror any more, nor to try to bite his elbow. Nor would he ever lie any more. He would start telling the truth from Monday on. And from Monday on only the truth would be written all over his face.

Before he knew it, it was Monday. No sooner had little Daddy taken his place at the breakfast table, than he was asked:

"Did you remember to wash your ears?"

"No," he said, telling the honest truth.

Actually, the boy hasn't been born yet who enjoys washing his ears. First of all, there are two of them to wash, and then again, they'll somehow be dirty by evening anyway. Grown-ups don't seem to understand this. That's why Grandpa said,

"Go wash your ears this minute."

"Okay," little Daddy sighed. He left the table, but was back again in a flash.

"Did you wash your ears?"

"Yes."

The next question seemed quite unnecessary: "One ear or both?"

"One ear," said little Daddy, speaking the honest truth.

So he was sent off to wash his other ear, and when he returned to the table, he was asked: "Did you have your cod-liver oil?"

"Yes," said little Daddy. He was telling the truth.

"A teaspoonful, or a tablespoonful?"

Whenever he had been asked this question before this memorable Monday, little Daddy had always replied, "A tablespoonful", although he'd never had more than a teaspoonful. Anybody who's ever had to have cod-liver oil will understand. This was the only lie he ever told his parents which never appeared on his face. They had always believed him. Actually, what he'd always done was to pour a little bit into a tablespoon, so that it both was and wasn't a tablespoonful.

But this Monday he said, "A teaspoonful", because he'd decided to tell the truth always. His reward for telling the truth was another teaspoonful of cod-liver oil.

They say there are children, who just love cod-liver oil. Have you ever known any? I haven't.

After breakfast little Daddy set off for school. Things were no better there.

"Who forgot to do his homework today?" the teacher asked the class.

No one said a word. No one but little Daddy.

"Me," he said.

"Why?"

He could've said he'd had a headache, or that their house had caught fire, and that after that there'd been an earthquake, and after that — In fact, he could've thought up any number of lies, but they usually never were much good anyway.



But little Daddy had decided not to lie any more, and so he told his teacher the truth. "I had no time to. I was reading a very interesting book."

"Indeed," said his teacher. "I believe I'll have to speak to your parents."

That was certainly nothing to look forward to.

That evening, one of his mother's friends dropped in to visit.

"Do you like chocolate?" she asked little Daddy.

"Yes. Very much," he said truthfully.

"And do you like me?" the lady said in a syrupy voice.

"No," said little Daddy.

"Why not?"

"Because you have a big wart on your cheek. And you talk so loud it sounds like you're mad."

To make a long story short, little Daddy didn't get the bar of chocolate.

That evening Grandma said to him, "Lying is awful. But telling the absolute truth every single time, no matter whether it's out of place or not, is no good, either. It's not my friend's fault she has that wart on her cheek. And if she's never learned to speak softly, it's too late for her to learn now. Besides, since she came to visit and brought you a chocolate bar, you might at least not have hurt her feelings."

Little Daddy was all confused, because he didn't

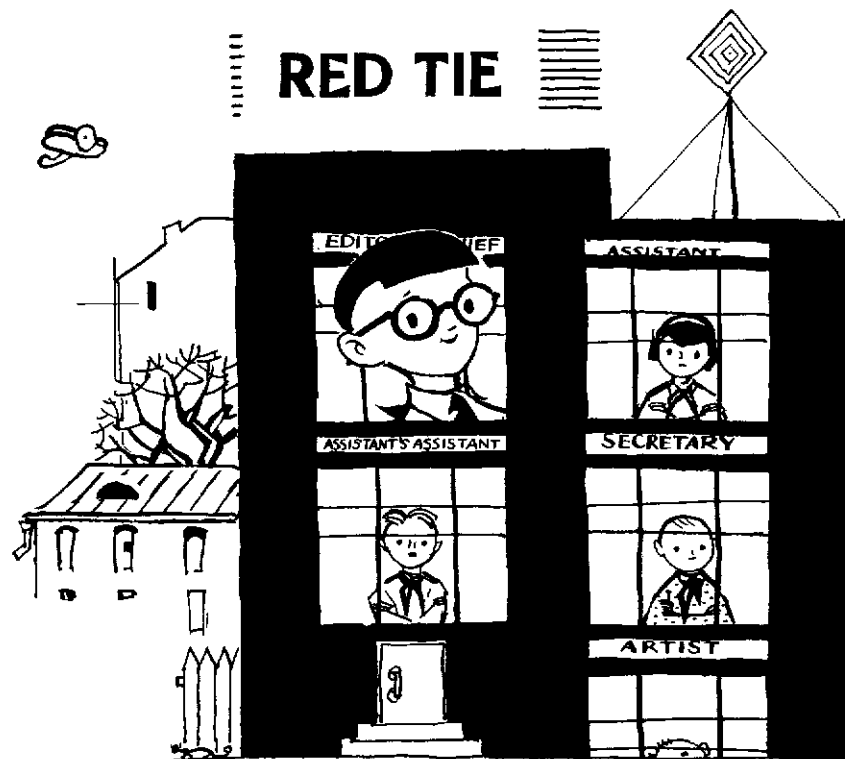
know when he was supposed to tell the truth, or when it was best not to say anything at all.

From then on little Daddy decided he'd never lie. Ever.

He always tried to tell the truth.

Quite often he'd have made out much better if he hadn't. To this very day his friends say that whenever he lies, it's written all over his face. Well, there's nothing he can do about that, is there?

## HOW DADDY PUT OUT THE WALL NEWSPAPER



When Daddy was a little Young Pioneer, he was elected editor of his class's wall newspaper. He was probably elected to the post because he wore glasses and wrote poetry.

After all, a real editor surely had to wear glasses. Little Daddy was elected unanimously. Four of his

classmates were elected to the editorial board. They were also elected unanimously.

At the very first meeting of the editorial board little Daddy got up and said, "Listen, kids, I'm the editor-in-chief, but what if I get sick? What if I break a leg? What if a mad dog bites me? What I'm getting at is I need an assistant. I say we elect Shura to the job. All in favor? Right. It's unanimous, Shura. You're my assistant."

Then Shura got up and said, "But what if I get sick? Or get run over, or something? Besides, I have a cat, and it might get rabies and bite me. What I mean is, I need an assistant, too. Let's elect Volodya. Who's in favor of electing him?"

Volodya was elected unanimously. True, he did say, "What if a brick falls on me?" But nobody paid any attention to him.

"This is the score, kids," little Daddy said. "If I get sick, Shura takes over, because he's my first assistant. If we both get sick, Volodya takes over, because he's my second assistant. And if Shura gets sick, but I don't, then Volodya becomes my first assistant. That takes care of our business for today."

"It does not," said Yura. "Who's going to be the secretary?"

"You!" the other boys shouted.

"Why me? Why not him?" he said, pointing to Sasha, the last member of the editorial board.

"Because Sasha's the artist," said little Daddy.

"He'll do all the drawings for the paper. Any more questions?"

"I've a question," Sasha the artist said. He sounded worried. "What if all of you die all of a sudden? Then what? That'll leave just me to put out the paper all by myself. Did you ever think of that?"

"Oh dry up!" said little Daddy.

"Quit blabbering," said Shura, little Daddy's first assistant.

"Relax, Sasha, we won't," said Volodya, little Daddy's second assistant.

Sasha finally calmed down.

"Now we have to think up a name for the paper," little Daddy said. "How about *Red Tie*?"

"That's what all the other classes' wall newspapers are called," said Shura.

"What d'you suggest?" little Daddy said.

"Nothing. I was just saying —"

"We don't want a lot of talk. We need suggestions. Well, kids?"

"*The Big Dipper*," Volodya said.

The other members of the editorial board thought this was a great joke.

"How come the Big Dipper?"

"Because it's a star. It's high up, and it's beautiful."

"It's too high up. What's your suggestion, Yura?"

"Let's name it *The Wall Newspaper of —*"

"Thanks, Yura," said little Daddy, interrupting him. "What's your suggestion, Sasha?"

"Huh?"

"What d'you think we should name the paper?"

"Me?"

"Yes, you."

"The paper?"

"Natch."

"I don't know. I'm just in charge of the art work."

"Okay, thanks, Sasha. Well, kids, I say let's each of us think of a good name for the paper. We'll get together again next Wednesday. That's all for today."

The following suggestions were put to the vote at the next meeting of the editorial board:

1. *Red Tie* (little Daddy's choice).

2. *The Young Pioneer* (Shura's choice).

3. *Young Pioneers* (Yura's choice).

4. *The Little Dipper* (Volodya's choice. He considered this a concession).

5. *Pen and Pencil* (Sasha's choice. He had no idea that that would be his nickname for a long time to come).

Each of the members defended his own choice, and since they couldn't agree on a name, they put the voting off till the following Wednesday.

That's when calamity struck. Sasha, the artist and only member of the editorial board who didn't have an assistant, got sick. Naturally, somebody could be named his assistant, and little Daddy was just about to open his mouth and suggest this when he remembered that none of the other members of the board

could really draw, so he shut his mouth as quickly as he had opened it. But then he opened it again and said,

"Now we don't have a staff artist. Or any articles for the paper. Nobody wants to contribute anything. Some kids say they can't write, others say they don't want to, and some just don't say anything. I'm tired of trying to talk them into writing for the paper. What about you guys?"

"Same here," said all the other members of the editorial board. "Nobody wants to write for the paper."

"Actually," said little Daddy in an undertone, "we can put the paper out without a heading."

"And without any articles," Shura muttered.

Nobody even snickered, because that's when they realized they didn't have a paper after all.

Just then there was a timid knock on the door.

"Come in," Yura said politely.

It was a girl named Anya. She was a new girl. A very ordinary kind of girl. But when this very ordinary girl named Anya began speaking in a very ordinary kind of voice, what she said was most extraordinary.

"Here's a heading for the paper," she said and unrolled a large sheet of paper. The members of the editorial board couldn't believe their eyes. Were they dreaming? There was the heading, drawn as nicely as Sasha ever could have done.

"Grisha asked me to give you a hand," Anya said. "I used to be on the editorial board in my old school," she added. "I brought you some articles the kids wrote, but there's only four."

"How many?" little Daddy croaked.

"Four. Mine and three others. That's all I could get from the girls. I don't know any of the boys yet," she added.

"That's okay," little Daddy said. "The boys'll write some articles right now. Right here. Then we can put the paper up tomorrow."

Nobody said a word. The next day *Red Tie*, the wall newspaper (nobody could argue about the name when the heading had been handed to them on a platter) was put up. Each member of the editorial board had written an article for it. Little Daddy had even made up a poem especially for the occasion. It was entitled "Our Dreams", and it ended like this:

*The editorial board dreamed  
(And they'll never forget it)  
That if you want to have a paper,  
You have to up and get to it.*

The other kids thought it was a good paper. Anya was elected to the editorial board. Sasha got over his cold and was soon back in school again.

The next issue was put out quickly, nicely, with everyone pitching in and having a good time, besides.

## HOW DADDY JUMPED OFF THE BALCONY



When Daddy was a little Young Pioneer and was away at summer camp, this is what happened one day.

Little Daddy's group was on the second floor of a two-story building. One evening, as he and some of

his friends were standing on one of the balconies, Shura said to Volodya,

"I bet you're scared to jump."

"I bet you're scared to, too," little Daddy said to Shura.

"I could easy, but you're all too scared to," Shura replied.

"What's so hard about jumping off a balcony?" Sasha said. "I even jumped off a parachute jump in the amusement park."

"That's different. But I bet you're scared to jump off this balcony."

"What's the use of just jumping off a balcony?" Volodya said. "You could if there was a fire or something."

"Okay, I'll light a match, and you jump," said Tanya, who was a real tomboy.

"Scaredy-cat, scaredy-cat!" everyone yelled.

"I bet you'd never jump," Volodya said to Tanya.

"Scaredy-cat! Scaredy-cat!" everyone yelled again, but now they were looking at Tanya.

Little Daddy saw Tanya bite her lip. Her face got very pale.

"Sure she'd jump," little Daddy said, "but it really is a stupid idea."

"The only stupid part about this is listening to all of you brag," said Tanya.

"Meaning me, too?" Volodya wanted to know.

"Meaning you more than anybody else. And you're yellow, besides," Tanya said.

Volodya got all red in the face. He was boiling mad. "Okay," he said. "You say I brag, and I'm yellow. Well, I'm the only one here who's going to jump, in case you're interested."

"You're too scared to," Tanya said and sniffed.

Then Volodya pushed his way through to the balcony rail and leaned his back against it. The railing creaked. "So I'm yellow, huh?" he said in a very quiet voice.

"You sure are," Tanya replied just as quietly.

"Volodya!" little Daddy said. "I never thought you were so dumb."

"Don't worry," said Tanya. "He won't jump. He's not that dumb."

"I'm not that dumb," Volodya repeated and climbed up onto the railing. It creaked still louder.

"Volodya!" everyone except Tanya shouted.

"Listen, everybody," Volodya said as he stood there on the creaky railing, holding on to a post for support. "I'm going to jump now. The only person who's responsible for my death is Tanya. Here I go! One, two, three!"

Little Daddy shut his eyes.

"Here I go!" he heard Volodya shout. The railing creaked, and something came down with a loud thud. A dead silence followed.

When little Daddy heard everyone laughing, he

opened his eyes. Volodya was sitting there on the balcony floor and laughing, too.

"I said I'd jump, didn't I? And I did!"

Tanya was the only one who didn't appreciate the joke. When the laughter finally died down, she said,

"I knew it. I just knew it! All you can do is brag!" All of a sudden she leaped up onto the railing. Daddy still remembers her standing there, slim and athletic-looking in her white T-shirt and blue shorts. She only stood there for a moment, though, because the very next instant she simply jumped down and landed in a springy crouch, but lost her balance and toppled over into the flower bed below. The boys on the balcony let out a yell and raced downstairs, and out into the garden. Volodya and little Daddy were the only ones left on the balcony. Volodya was still sitting dazedly on the floor. Little Daddy stared at him in silence.

This silence lasted for quite a while.

Volodya opened and shut his mouth several times before he finally whispered: "She jumped."

All little Daddy could do was repeat: "She jumped."

Meanwhile, down by the flower bed, the boys were shouting: "Three cheers for Tanya!"

She beamed at them and said, "See? I wasn't a bit scared."

"She's right," little Daddy said. "She wasn't a bit scared. But you are."

Volodya said nothing.

"So am I," said little Daddy, just to console him. Then, very slowly and cautiously, he climbed up onto the creaky railing and clutched the post for dear life. He had no intention of jumping. He was just trying to see what had scared Volodya so, but hadn't scared Tanya. It didn't take him more than a second to figure it out, either.

He was about to climb down onto the floor of the balcony when their counsellor Grisha, who was passing by just then, spotted little Daddy standing on the railing and yelled, "What're you doing? Get down this minute!" Grisha looked scared to death.

Little Daddy swayed. The creaky railing gave way. He lost his footing and tumbled down into the flower bed together with a piece of the railing. That was the end of the flower bed.

Daddy still can't understand how he managed to get up and walk away, for he certainly might've broken an arm or a leg. After all, he hadn't planned his jump. He'd simply fallen from the second story. Naturally, he was black-and-blue all over and badly scratched, but that was all.

"Good for you!" Tanya said, as all the other boys looked on.

No one believed he'd merely tumbled down. Not even Volodya (who told Grisha he'd seen the railing give way) believed it was a tumble.

"Come clean," he said to little Daddy. "You

could've jumped back down on the balcony like I did. Boy, you and Tanya sure are great. She jumped just to prove she could do it, and so did you. You didn't want the girls to think they're better than us. But she was right. I really was bragging."

The next day at a meeting of their group Tanya and little Daddy were told that this was positively the very last time they were being excused. That evening the boys all cheered little Daddy, but he was awfully ashamed and kept saying, "But I fell! Honest. I fell!"

Nobody would believe him. That's when a very strange thought occurred to him: you feel like arguing when you're being scolded, but not when you're being praised. So he listened to the boys praising him and didn't say a word, but it didn't really make him feel very happy.

All this happened many, many years ago. And Daddy was scolded and praised many times during the years. But believe me, there's nothing worse than being praised for something you didn't do. You somehow wish you'd be scolded instead.

That's the lesson little Daddy learned the summer he fell off the balcony and was cheered for doing so.

## REQUEST TO READERS

Raduga Publishers would be glad to have your opinion of this book, its translation and design, and any suggestions you may have for future publications.

Please send your comments to 17, Zubovsky Boulevard, Moscow, USSR.

